American Holocaust
by David Stannard
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Prologue
excerpted from the book

In the darkness of an early July morning in 1945, on a desolate spot in the New Mexico desert named after a John Donne sonnet celebrating the Holy Trinity, the first atomic bomb was exploded. J. Robert Oppenheimer later remembered that the immense flash of light, followed by the thunderous roar, caused a few observers to laugh and others to cry. But most, he said, were silent. Oppenheimer himself recalled at that instant a line from the Bhagavad-Gita:
"I am become death, the shatterer of worlds."
There is no reason to think that anyone on board the Nina, the Pinta, or the Santa Maria, on an equally dark early morning four and a half centuries earlier, thought of those ominous lines from the ancient Sanskrit poem when the crews of the Spanish ships spied a flicker of light on the windward side of the island they would name after the Holy Saviour. But the intuition, had it occurred, would have been as appropriate then as it was when that first nuclear blast rocked the New Mexico desert sands.
In both instances-at the Trinity test site in 1945 and at San Salvador in 1492-those moments of achievement crowned years of intense personal struggle and adventure for their protagonists and were culminating points of ingenious technological achievement for their countries. But both instances also were prelude to orgies of human destructiveness that, each in its own way, attained a scale of devastation not previously witnessed in the entire history of the world.
Just twenty-one days after the first atomic test in the desert, the Japanese industrial city of Hiroshima was leveled by nuclear blast; never before had so many people-at least 130,000, probably many more-died from a single explosion. Just twenty-one years after Columbus's first landing in the Caribbean, the vastly populous island that the explorer had re-named Hispaniola was effectively desolate; nearly 8,000,000 people-those Columbus chose to call Indians-had been killed by violence, disease, and despair. It took a little longer, about the span of a single human generation, but what happened on Hispaniola was the equivalent of more than fifty Hiroshimas. And Hispaniola was only the beginning.
Within no more than a handful of generations following their first encounters with Europeans, the vast majority of the Western Hemisphere's native peoples had been exterminated. The pace and magnitude of their obliteration varied from place to place and from time to time, but for years now historical demographers have been uncovering, in region upon region, post-Columbian depopulation rates of between 90 and 98 percent with such regularity that an overall decline of 95 percent has become a working rule of thumb. What this means is that, on average, for every twenty natives alive at the moment of European contact-when the lands of the Americas teemed with numerous tens of millions of people-only one stood in their place when the bloodbath was over.
To put this in a contemporary context, the ratio of native survivorship in the Americas following European contact was less than half of what the human survivorship ratio would be in the United States today if every single white person and every single black person died.
The destruction of the Indians of the Americas was, far and away, the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world. That is why, as one historian aptly has said, far from the heroic and romantic heraldry that customarily is used to symbolize the European settlement of the Americas, the emblem most congruent with reality would be a pyramid of skulls.

Scholarly estimates of the size of the post-Columbian holocaust have climbed sharply in recent decades. Too often, however, academic discussions of this ghastly event have reduced the devastated indigenous peoples and their cultures to statistical calculations in recondite demographic analyses. It is easy for this to happen. From the very beginning, merely taking the account of so mammoth a cataclysm seemed an impossible task. Wrote one Spanish adventurer-who arrived in the New World only two decades after Columbus's first landing, and who himself openly reveled in the torrent of native blood-there was neither "paper nor time enough to tell all that the [conquistadors] did to ruin the Indians and rob them and destroy the land." As a result, the very effort to describe the disaster's overwhelming magnitude has tended to obliterate both the writer's and the reader's sense of its truly horrific human element.

In an apparent effort to counteract this tendency, one writer, Tzvetan Todorov, begins his study of the events of 1492 and immediately thereafter with an epigraph from Diego de Landa's Relacion de las cosas de Yucatan:

The captain Alonso Lopez de Avila, brother-in-law of the adelantado Montejo, captured, during the war in Bacalan, a young Indian woman of lovely and gracious appearance. She had promised her husband, fearful lest they should kill him in the war, not to have relations with any other man but him, and so no persuasion was sufficient to prevent her from taking her own life to avoid being defiled by another man; and because of this they had her thrown to the dogs.

Todorov then dedicates his book "to the memory of a Mayan woman devoured by dogs."

It is important to try to hold in mind an image of that woman, and her brothers and sisters and the innumerable others who suffered similar fates, as one reads Todorov's book, or this one, or any other work on this subject-just as it is essential, as one reads about the Jewish Holocaust or the horrors of the African slave trade, to keep in mind the treasure of a single life in order to avoid becoming emotionally anesthetized by the sheer force of such overwhelming human evil and destruction. There is, for example, the case of a small Indian boy whose name no one knows today, and whose unmarked skeletal remains are hopelessly intermingled with those of hundreds of anonymous others in a mass grave on the American plains, but a boy who once played on the banks of a quiet creek in eastern Colorado-until the morning, in 1864, when the American soldiers came. Then, as one of the cavalrymen later told it, while his compatriots were slaughtering and mutilating the bodies of all the women and all the children they could catch, he spotted the boy trying to flee:

There was one little child, probably three years old, just big enough to walk through the sand. The Indians had gone ahead, and this little child was behind following after them. The little fellow was perfectly naked, travelling on the sand. I saw one man get off his horse, at a distance of about seventy-five yards, and draw up his rifle and fire-he missed the child. Another man came up and said, "Let me try the son of a bitch; I can hit him." He got down off his horse, kneeled down and fired at the little child, but he missed him. A third man came up and made a similar remark, and fired, and the little fellow dropped.

We must do what we can to recapture and to try to understand, in human terms, what it was that was crushed, what it was that was butchered It is not enough merely to acknowledge that much was lost. So close to total was the human incineration and carnage in the post-Columbian Americas, however, that of the tens of millions who were killed, few individual lives left sufficient traces for subsequent biographical representation...

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Moreover, the important question for the future in this case is not "can it happen again?" Rather, it is "can it be stopped?" For the genocide in the Americas, and in other places where the world's indigenous peoples survive, has never really ceased. As recently as 1986, the

Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States observed that 40,000 people had simply "disappeared" in Guatemala during the preceding fifteen years. Another 100,000 had been openly murdered. That is the equivalent, in the United States, of more than 4,000,000 people slaughtered or removed under official government decree-a figure that is almost six times the number of American battle deaths in the Civil War, World War One, World War Two, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined.'

Almost all those dead and disappeared were Indians, direct descendants-as was that woman who was devoured by dogs-of the Mayas, creators of one of the most splendid civilizations that this earth has ever seen. Today, as five centuries ago, these people are being tortured and slaughtered, their homes and villages bombed and razed-while more than two-thirds of their rain forest homelands have now been intentionally burned and scraped into ruin.' The murder and destruction continue, with the aid and assistance of the United States, even as these words are being written and read. And many of the detailed accounts from contemporary observers read much like those recorded by the conquistadors' chroniclers nearly 500 years earlier.

"Children, two years, four years old, they just grabbed them and tore them in two," reports one witness to a military massacre of Indians in Guatemala in 1982. Recalls another victim of an even more recent assault on an Indian encampment:

With tourniquets they killed the children, of two years, of nine months, of six months. They killed and burned them all.... What they did [to my
father] was put a machete in here (pointing to his chest) and they cut open his heart, and they left him all burned up. This is the pain we shall never forget ... Better to die here with a bullet and not die in that way, like my father did."

Adds still another report, from a list of examples seemingly without end:

At about 1:00 p.m., the soldiers began to fire at the women inside the small church. The majority did not die there, but were separated from their children, taken to their homes in groups, and killed, the majority apparently with machetes.... Then they returned to kill the children, whom they had left crying and screaming by themselves, without their mothers. Our informants, who were locked up in the courthouse, could see this through a hole in the window and through the doors carelessly left open by a guard. The soldiers cut open the children's stomachs with knives or they grabbed the children's little legs and smashed their heads with heavy sticks.... Then they continued with the men. They took them out, tied their hands, threw them on the ground, and shot them. The authorities of the area were killed inside the courthouse.... It was then that the survivors were able to escape, protected by the smoke of the fire which had been set to the building. Seven men, three of whom survived, managed to escape. It was 5:30 p.m..

In all, 352 Indians were killed in this massacre, at a time when 440 towns were being entirely destroyed by government troops, when almost 10,000 unarmed people were being killed or made to "disappear" annually, and when more than 1,000,000 of Guatemala's approximately 4,000,000 natives were being displaced by the deliberate burning and wasting of their ancestral lands. During such episodes of mass butchery, some children escape; only their parents and grandparents are killed. That is why it was reported in Guatemala in 1985 that "116,000 orphans had been tabulated by the judicial branch census throughout the country, the vast majority of them in the Indian townships of the western and central highlands."

Reminders are all around us, if we care to look, that the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century extermination of the indigenous people of Hispaniola, brought on by European military assault and the importation of exotic diseases, was in part only an enormous prelude to human catastrophes that followed on other killing grounds, and continue to occur today-from the forests of Brazil and Paraguay and elsewhere in South and Central America, where direct

government violence still slaughters thousands of Indian people year in and year out, to the reservations and urban slums of North America, where more sophisticated indirect government violence has precisely the same effect-all the while that Westerners engage in exultation over the 500th anniversary of the European discovery of America, the time and the place where all the killing began.

Other reminders surround us, as well, however, that there continues among indigenous peoples today the echo of their fifteenth and sixteenth century opposition to annihilation, when, despite the wanton killing by the European invaders and the carnage that followed the introduction of explosive disease epidemics, the natives resisted with an intensity the conquistadors found difficult to believe. "I do not know how to describe it," wrote Bernal Diaz del Castillo of the defiance the Spanish encountered in Mexico, despite the wasting of the native population by bloodbath and torture and disease, "for neither cannon nor muskets nor crossbows availed, nor hand-to-hand fighting, nor killing thirty or forty of them every time we charged, for they still fought on in as close ranks and with more energy than in the beginning." Five centuries later that resistance remains, in various forms, throughout North and South and Central America, as it does among indigenous peoples in other lands that have suffered from the Westerners' furious wrath. Compared with what they once were, the native peoples in most of these places are only remnants now. But also in each of those places, and in many more, the struggle for physical and cultural survival, and for recovery of a deserved pride and autonomy, continues unabated.

All the ongoing violence against the world's indigenous peoples, in whatever form-as well as the native peoples' various forms of resistance to that violence-will persist beyond our full understanding, however, and beyond our ability to engage and humanely come to grips with it, until we are able to comprehend the magnitude and the causes of the human destruction that virtually consumed the people of the Americas and other people in other subsequently colonized parts of the globe, beginning with Columbus's early morning sighting of landfall on October 12, 1492. That was the start of it all. This book is offered as one contribution to our necessary comprehension.

He'eia, O'ahu January 1992 D.E.S.

Before Columbus

Combined, North America and South America cover an area of 16,000,000 square miles, more than a quarter of the land surface of the globe. To its first human inhabitants, tens of thousands of years ago, this enormous domain they had discovered was literally a world unto itself: a world of miles-high mountains and vast fertile prairies, of desert shrublands and dense tropical rain forests, of frigid arctic tundra and hot murky swamps, of deep and fecund river valleys, of sparkling water lakes, of canopied woodlands, of savannahs and steppes-and thousands upon thousands of miles of magnificent ocean coast. There were places where it almost never rained, and places where it virtually never stopped; there were places where the temperature reached 130 degrees Fahrenheit, and places where it dropped to 80 degrees below zero. But in all these places, under all these conditions, eventually some native people made their homes.

By the time ancient Greece was falling under the control of Rome, in North America the Adena Culture already had been flourishing for a thousand years. As many as 500 Adena living sites have been uncovered by modern archaeologists. Centered in present-day Ohio, they radiate out as far as Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and

West Virginia. We will never know how many hundreds more such sites are buried beneath the modern cities and suburbs of the northeastern United States, but we do know that these early sedentary peoples lived in towns with houses that were circular in design and that ranged from single-family dwellings as small as twenty feet in diameter to multi-family units up to eighty feet across. These residences commonly were built in close proximity to large public enclosures of 300 feet and more in diameter that modern archaeologists have come to refer to as "sacred circles" because of their presumed use for religious ceremonial purposes. The buildings they constructed for the living, however, were minuscule compared with the receptacles they built for their dead: massive tombs, such as that at Grave Creek in West Virginia, that spread out hundreds of feet across and reached seven stories in height-and that were commonplace structures throughout Adena territory as early as 500 B.C..

In addition to the subsistence support of hunting and fishing, and gathering the natural fruit and vegetable bounty growing all around them, the ancient Adena people imported gourds and squash from Mexico and cultivated them along with early strains of maize, tubers, sunflowers, and other plant domesticates. Another import from the south-from South America-was tobacco, which they smoked through pipes in rituals of celebration and remembrance. From neighboring residents of the area that we now know as the Carolinas they imported sheets of mica, while from Lake Superior and beyond to the north they acquired copper, which they hammered and cut and worked into bracelets and rings and other bodily adornments.

Overlapping chronologically with the Adena was the Hopewell Culture that grew in time to cover an area stretching in one direction from the northern Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, in the other direction from Kansas to New York. The Hopewell people, who as a group were physiologically as well culturally distinguishable from the Adena, lived in permanent communities based on intensive horticulture, communities marked by enormous earthen monuments, similar to those of the Adena, that the citizenry built as religious shrines and to house the remains of their dead. Literally tens of thousands of these towering earthen mounds once covered the American landscape from the Great Plains to the eastern woodlands, many of them precise, geometrically shaped, massive structures of a thousand feet in diameter and several stories high; others-such as the famous quarter-mile long coiled snake at Serpent Mound, Ohio-were imaginatively designed symbolic temples.

No society that had not achieved a large population and an exceptionally high level of political and social refinement, as well as a sophisticated control of resources, could possibly have had the time or inclination or talent to design and construct such edifices. In addition, the Hopewell people had trade networks extending to Florida in one direction and Wyoming and North Dakota in the other, through which they acquired from different nations of indigenous peoples the copper, gold, silver, crystal, quartz, shell, bone, obsidian, pearl, and other raw materials that their artisans worked into elaborately embossed and decorative metal foil, carved jewelry, earrings, pendants, charms, breastplates, and other objets d'art, as well as axes, adzes, awls, and more. Indeed, so extensive were the Hopewell trading relationships with other societies throughout the continent that archaeologists have recovered from the centers of Hopewell culture in Ohio more materials originating from outside than from within the region.

To the west of the Hopewell there emerged in time the innumerable villages of the seemingly endless plains-large, usually permanent communities of substantial, multi-family homes and common buildings, the villages themselves often fortified with stockades and dry, surrounding moats. These were the progenitors of the people-the Mandan, the Cree, the Blood, the Blackfoot, the Crow, the Piegan, the Hidatsa, the Arikara, the Cheyenne, the Omaha, the Pawnee, the Arapaho, the Kansa, the Iowa, the Osage, the Kiowa, the Wichita, the

Commanche, the Plains Cree, various separate nations of Sioux, and others, including the Ute and Shoshoni to the west-who became the classic nomads on horseback that often serve as the popular American model for all Indian societies. But even they did not resort to that pattern of life until they were driven to it by invading armies of displaced Europeans.
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Arawak is the general, post-Columbian name given to various peoples who made a long, slow series of migrations from the coast of Venezuela to Trinidad, then across open ocean perhaps first to Tobago, then Grenada, and on up the chain of islands that constitute the Antilles-St. Vincent, Barbados, St. Lucia, Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Antigua, Barbuda, St. Kitts, Anguilla, St. Croix, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, Jamaica, Cuba-then finally off to the Bahamas, leaving behind at each stop populations that grew and flourished and evolved culturally in their own distinctive ways. To use a comparison once made by Irving Rouse, the people of these islands who came to be known as Arawaks are analogous to those, in another part of the world, who came to be known as English: "The present inhabitants of southern Great Britain call themselves 'English,' and recognize that their ethnic group, the English people, is the product of a series of migrations from the continent of Europe into the British Isles, beginning with various prehistoric peoples and continuing with the Celts, Angles, Saxons, Vikings, and Normans of protohistoric time." Similarly, Arawak (sometimes "Taino," but that is a misnomer, as it properly applies only to a particular social and cultural group) is the name now given to the melange of peoples who, over the course of many centuries, carried out those migrations across the Caribbean, probably terminating with the Saladoid people sometime around two thousand years ago. By the time of their encounter with Columbus and his crews, the islands had come to be governed by chiefs or caciques (there were at least five paramount chiefdoms on Hispaniola alone, and others throughout the region) and the people lived in numerous densely populated villages both ,' inland and along all the coasts. The houses in most of these villages were similar to those described by the Spanish priest Bartolome de Las Casas:
The inhabitants of this island . . . and elsewhere built their houses of wood and thatch in the form of a bell. These were very high and roomy so that in each there might be ten or more households.... On the inside designs and symbols and patterns like paintings were fashioned by using wood and bark that had been dyed black along with other wood peeled so as to stay white, thus appearing as though made of some other attractive painted stuff. Others they adorned with very white stripped reeds that are a kind of thin and delicate cane. Of these they made graceful figures and designs that gave the interior of the houses the appearance of having been painted. On the outside the houses were covered with a fine and sweet-smelling grass.
These large buildings conventionally were arranged to face the great house that was inhabited by the local cacique, and all of them in turn faced an open field or court where dances and ball games and other festivities and ceremonies were held. In larger communities, several such fields were placed at strategic locations among the residential compounds.
The people of these climate-blessed islands supported themselves with a highly developed level of agriculture-especially on Cuba and Hispaniola, which are among the largest islands on earth; Cuba, after all, is larger than South Korea (which today contains more than 42,000,000 people) and Hispaniola is nearly twice the size of Switzerland. In the infrequent areas where agricultural engineering was necessary, the people of the Indies created irrigation systems that were equal in sophistication to those existing in sixteenth-century Spain. Their staple food was cassava bread, made from the manioc plant yuca, which they

cultivated in great abundance. But also, through so many long generations in the same benign tropical environment, the Arawaks had devised an array of unique methods for more than satisfying their subsistence needs-such as the following technique which they used to catch green sea turtles weighing hundreds of pounds, large fish, and other marine life, including manatees:

Noting that the remora or suckerfish, Echeneis naucrates, attached itself to the body of a shark or other larger fish by means of a suction disc in its head, the Arawaks caught, fed, and tamed the remora, training it to tolerate a light cord fastened to its tail and gill frame. When a turtle was sighted the remora was released. Immediately it swam to the turtle, attaching its suction disc to the under side of the carapace. The canoe followed the turtle, the Arawak angler holding a firm line on the remora which, in turn, held tightly to its quarry until the turtle could be gaffed or tied to the canoe.

In addition to this technique, smaller fish were harvested by the use of plant derivatives that stupefied them, allowing the natives simply to scoop up large numbers as though gathering plants in a field. Water birds were taken by floating on the water's surface large calabashes which concealed swimmers who would seize individual birds, one at a time, without disturbing the larger flock. And large aquaculture ponds were created and walled in to maintain and actually cultivate enormous stocks of fish and turtles for human consumption. A single one of these numerous reed marine corrals held as many as 1000 large sea turtles. This yielded a quantity of meat equal to that of 100 head of cattle, and a supply that was rapidly replenished: a fertile female turtle would lay about 500 eggs each season. Still, the Arawaks were careful not to disturb the natural balance of these and other creatures; the evidence for this is that for millennia they sustained in perpetuity their long-term supply of such natural foodstuffs. It was only after the coming of the Spanish-and, in particular, their release of dogs and pigs that turned feral and ran wild-that the wildlife ecology of the islands found itself in serious trouble.

In sum, as Caribbean expert Carl Sauer once put it, "the tropical idyll of the accounts of Columbus and Peter Martyr was largely true" regarding the Arawak. "The people suffered no want. They took care of their plantings, were dextrous at fishing and were bold canoeists and swimmers. They designed attractive houses and kept them clean. They found aesthetic expression in woodworking. They had leisure to enjoy diversion in ball games, dances, and music. They lived in peace and amity."

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AII that was to change, however, with shocking and deadly suddenness, once those first three Spanish ships bobbed into view on the rim of the Caribbean horizon. For it was then only a matter of months before there would begin the worst series of human disease disasters, combined with the most extensive and most violent programs of human eradication, this world has ever seen.

Pestilence and Genocide

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The Spain that Christopher Columbus and his crews left behind before dawn on August 3, 1492, as they sailed forth from Palos and out into the Atlantic, was for most of its people a land of violence, squalor, treachery, and intolerance. In this respect Spain was no different from the rest of Europe.

Epidemic outbreaks of plague and smallpox, along with routine attacks of measles, influenza, diphtheria, typhus, typhoid fever, and more, frequently swept European cities and towns clean

of 10 to 20 percent of their populations at a single stroke. As late as the mid-seventeenth century more than 80,000 Londoners-one out of every six residents in the city-died from plague in a matter of months. And again and again, as with its companion diseases, the pestilence they called the Black Death returned. Like most of the other urban centers in Europe, says one historian who has specialized in the subject, "every twenty-five or thirty years-sometimes more frequently-the city was convulsed by a great epidemic." Indeed, for centuries an individual's life chances in Europe's pesthouse cities were so poor that the natural populations of the towns were in perpetual decline that was offset only by in-migration from the countryside-in-migration, says one historian, that was "vital if [the cities] were to be preserved from extinction."

Famine, too, was common. What J. H. Elliott has said of sixteenth century Spain had held true throughout the Continent for generations beyond memory: "The rich ate, and ate to excess, watched by a thousand hungry eyes as they consumed their gargantuan meals. The rest of the population starved." This was in normal times. The slightest fluctuation in food prices could cause the sudden deaths of additional tens of thousands who lived on the margins of perpetual hunger. So precarious was the existence of these multitudes in France that as late as the seventeenth century each "average" increase in the price of wheat or millet directly killed a proportion of the French population equal to nearly twice the percentage of Americans who died in the Civil War.

That was the seventeenth century, when times were getting better. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries prices fluctuated constantly, leading people to complain as a Spanish agriculturalist did in 1513 that "today a pound of mutton costs as much as a whole sheep used to, a loaf as much as a fanega [a bushel and a half] of wheat, a pound of wax or oil as much as an arroba [25 Spanish pounds]." The result of this, as one French historian has observed, was that "the epidemic that raged in Paris in 1482 fits the classic pattern: famine in the countryside, flight of the poor in search of help, then outbreak of disease in the city following upon the malnutrition." And in Spain the threat of famine in the countryside was especially omnipresent. Areas such as Castile and Andalusia were wracked with harvest failures that brought on mass death repeatedly during the fifteenth century. But since both causes of death, disease and famine, were so common throughout Europe, many surviving records did not bother (or were unable) to make distinctions between them. Consequently, even today historians find it difficult or impossible to distinguish between those of the citizenry who died of disease and those who merely starved to death.

Roadside ditches, filled with stagnant water, served as public latrines in the cities of the fifteenth century, and they would continue to do so for centuries to follow. So too would other noxious habits and public health hazards of the time persist on into the future-from the practice of leaving the decomposing offal of butchered animals to fester in the streets, to London's "special problem," as historian Lawrence Stone puts it, of "poor's holes." These were "large, deep, open pits in which were laid the bodies of the poor, side by side, row upon row. Only when the pit was filled with bodies was it finally covered over with earth." As one contemporary, quoted by Stone, delicately observed: "How noisome the stench is that arises from these holes so stowed with dead bodies, especially in sultry seasons and after rain."

Along with the stench and repulsive appearance of the openly displayed dead, human and animal alike, a modern visitor to a European city in this era would be repelled by the appearance and the vile aromas given off by the living as well. Most people never bathed, not once in an entire lifetime. Almost everyone had his or her brush with smallpox and other deforming diseases that left survivors partially blinded, pock-marked, or crippled, while it was the norm for men and women to have "bad breath from the rotting teeth and constant stomach disorders which can be documented from many sources, while suppurating ulcers,

eczema, scabs, running sores and other nauseating skin diseases were extremely common, and often lasted for years."

Street crime in most cities lurked around every corner. One especially popular technique for robbing someone was to drop a heavy rock or chunk of masonry on his head from an upper-story window and then to rifle the body for jewelry and money. This was a time, observes Norbert Elias, when "it was one of the festive pleasures of Midsummer Day to burn alive one or two dozen cats," and when, as Johan Huizinga once put it, "the continuous disruption of town and country by every kind of dangerous rabble [and] the permanent threat of harsh and unreliable law enforcement nourished a feeling of universal uncertainty." With neither culturally developed systems of social obligation and restraint in place, nor effective police forces in their stead, the cities of Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were little more than chaotic population agglomerates with entire sections serving as the residential turf of thieves and brigands, and where the wealthy were forced to hire torch-bearing bodyguards to accompany them out at night. In times of famine, cities and towns became the setting for food riots. And the largest riot of all, of course-though the word hardly does it justice-was the Peasants' War, which broke out in 1S24 following a series of local revolts that had been occurring repeatedly since the previous century. The Peasants' War killed over 100,000 people.

As for rural life in calmer moments, Jean de La Bruyere's seventeenth century description of human existence in the French countryside gives an apt summary of what historians for the past several decades have been uncovering in their research on rustic communities in Europe at large during the entire late medieval to early modern epoch: "sullen animals, male and female [are] scattered over the country, dark, livid, scorched by the sun, attached to the earth they dig up and turn over with invincible persistence; they have a kind of articulate speech, and when they rise to their feet, they show a human face, and, indeed, they are men. At night they retire to dens where they live on black bread, water, and roots."

To be sure, La Bruyere was a satirist and although, in the manner of all caricaturists, his portrait contains key elements of truth, it also is cruel in what it omits. And what it omits is the fact that these wretchedly poor country folk, for all their life-threatening deprivations, were not "sullen animals." They were, in fact, people quite capable of experiencing the same feelings of tenderness and love and fear and sadness, however constricted by the limitations of their existence, as did, and do, all human beings in every corner of the globe.

But what Lawrence Stone has said about the typical English village also was likely true throughout Europe at this time-that is, that because of the dismal social conditions and prevailing social values, it "was a place filled with malice and hatred, its only unifying bond being the occasional episode of mass hysteria, which temporarily bound together the majority in order to harry and persecute the local witch." Indeed, as in England, there were towns on the Continent where as many as a third of the population were accused of witchcraft and where ten out of every hundred people were executed for it in a single year. In one small, remote locale within reputedly peaceful Switzerland, more than 3300 people were killed in the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century for allegedly Satanic activities. The tiny village of Wiesensteig saw sixty-three women burned to death in one year alone, while in Obermarchtal fifty-four people-out of a total population of barely 700-died at the stake during a three-year period. Thus, while it is true that the Europeans of those days possessed the same range of emotions that we do, as Stone puts it, "it is noticeable that hate seems to have been more prominent an emotion than love."

At the time La Bruyere was writing (which was a good bit later than the time of Columbus, during which time conditions had improved), the French "knew every nuance of poverty... At the top were those who "at best lived at subsistence level, at worst fell far below," while at the

bottom were those described as dans un e'tat d'indigence absolue, meaning that "one had no food or adequate clothing or proper shelter, that one had parted with the few battered cooking-pots and blankets which often constituted the main assets of a working-class family." Across the whole of France, between a third and half the population fell under one of these categories of destitution, and in regions such as Brittany, western Normandy, Poitou, and the Massif the proportion ascended upwards of two-thirds. In rural areas in general, between half and 90 percent of the population did not have land sufficient for their support, forcing them to migrate out, fall into permanent debt, or die.

And France was hardly unique. In Genoa, writes historian Fernand Braudel, "the homeless poor sold themselves as galley slaves every winter." They were fortunate to have that option. In more northern climes, during winter months, the indigent simply froze to death. The summer, on the other hand, was when the plague made its cyclical visitations. That is why, m summer months, the wealthy left the cities to the poor: as Braudel points out elsewhere, Rome along with other towns "was a graveyard of fever" during times of warmer weather. Throughout Europe, about half the children born during this time died before reaching the age of ten. Among the poorer classes-and in Spain particularly, which had an infant mortality rate almost 40 percent higher even than England's-things were much worse. In addition to exposure, disease, and malnutrition, one of the causes for such a high infant mortality rate (close to three out of ten babies in Spain did not live to see their first birthdays) was abandonment. Thousands upon thousands of children who could not be cared for were simply left to die on dungheaps or in roadside ditches. Others were sold into slavery.

East European children, particularly Romanians, seem to have been favorites of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century slave trade, although many thousands of adults were enslaved as well. Child slaves, however, were as expensive as adults, for reasons best left to the imagination, as is indicated by a fourteenth-century letter from a man involved in the business: "We are informed about the little slave girl you say you personally need," he wrote to his prospective client, "and about her features and age, and for what you want her.... Whenever ships come from Romania, they should carry some [slave girls]; but keep in mind that little slave girls are as expensive as the grown ones, and there will be none that does not cost 50 to 60 florins if we want one of any value." Those purchasing female slaves of child-bearing age sometimes were particularly lucky and received a free bonus of a baby on the way. As historian John Boswell has reported: "Ten to twenty percent of the female slaves sold in Seville in the fifteenth century were pregnant or breast-feeding, and their infants were usually included with them at no extra cost."

The wealthy had their problems too. They hungered after gold and silver. The Crusades, begun four centuries earlier, had increased the appetites of affluent Europeans for exotic foreign luxuries-for silks and spices, fine cotton, drugs, perfumes, and jewelry-material pleasures that required pay in bullion. Thus, gold had become for Europeans, in the words of one Venetian commentator of the time, "the sinews of all government . . . its mind, soul . . . its essence and its very life." The supply of the precious metal, by way of the Middle East and Africa, had always been uncertain. Now, however, the wars in eastern Europe had nearly emptied the Continent's coffers. A new supply, a more regular supply-and preferably a cheaper supply-was needed.

Violence, of course, was everywhere, as alluded to above; but occasionally it took on an especially perverse character. In addition to the hunting down and burning of witches, which was an everyday affair in most locales, in Milan in 1476 a man was torn to pieces by an enraged mob and his dismembered limbs were then eaten by his tormenters. In Paris and Lyon, Huguenots were killed and butchered, and their various body parts were sold openly in

the streets. Other eruptions of bizarre torture, murder, and ritual cannibalism were not uncommon.
Such behavior, nonetheless, was not officially condoned, at least not usually. Indeed, wild and untrue accusations of such activities formed the basis for many of the witch hunts and religious persecutions-particularly of Jews-during this time. In precisely those years when Columbus was trekking around Europe in search of support for his maritime adventures, the Inquisition was raging in Spain. Here, and elsewhere in Europe, those out of favor with the powerful-particularly those who were believed to be un-Christian-were tortured and killed in the most ingenious of fashions: on the gallows, at the stake, on the rack-while others were crushed I beheaded, flayed alive, or drawn and quartered.
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If it sounded like Paradise, that was no accident. Paradise filled with gold. And when he came to describe the people he had met, Columbus's Edenic imagery never faltered:
The people of this island and of all the other islands which I have found and ,\ seen, or have not seen, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore / them, except that some women cover one place only with the leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for that purpose. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they capable of using them, although they are well-built people of handsome stature, because they are wondrous timid. . . . [T]hey are so artless and free with all they possess, that no one would believe it without having seen it. Of anything they have, if you ask them for it, they never say no; rather they invite the person to share it, and show as much love as if they were giving their hearts; and whether the thing be of value or of small price, at once they are content with whatever little thing of whatever kind may be given to them.
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p66
I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of Their Highnesses. We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as Their Highnesses may command. And we shall take your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey and refuse to receive their lord and resist and contradict him.
a statement Spaniards were required to read to Indians they encountered in the New World
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p69
Wherever the marauding, diseased, and heavily armed Spanish forces went out on patrol, accompanied by ferocious armored dogs that had been trained to kill and disembowel, they preyed on the local communities- already plague-enfeebled-forcing them to supply food and women and slaves, and whatever else the soldiers might desire. At virtually every previous landing on this trip Columbus's troops had gone ashore and killed indiscriminately, as though for sport, whatever animals and birds and natives they encountered, "looting and destroying all they found," as the Admiral's son Fernando blithely put it. Once on Hispaniola, however, Columbus fell ill-whether from the flu or, more likely, from some other malady-and what little restraint he had maintained over his men disappeared as he went through a lengthy period of recuperation. The troops went wild, stealing, killing, raping, and torturing natives, trying to force them to divulge the whereabouts of the imagined treasure-houses of gold.
The Indians tried to retaliate by launching ineffective ambushes of stray Spaniards. But the combined killing force of Spanish diseases and Spanish military might was far greater than

anything the natives could ever have imagined. Finally, they decided the best response was flight. Crops were left to rot in the fields as the Indians attempted to escape the frenzy of the conquistadors' attacks. Starvation then added its contribution, along with pestilence and mass murder, to the native peoples' woes.

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The massacres continued. Columbus remained ill for months while his soldiers wandered freely. More than 50,000 natives were reported dead from these encounters by the time the Admiral had recovered from his sickness. And when at last his health and strength had been restored Columbus's response to his men's unorganized depredations was to organize them. In March of 1495 he massed together several hundred armored troops, cavalry, and a score or more of trained attack dogs. They set forth across the countryside, tearing into assembled masses of sick and unarmed native people, slaughtering them by the thousands. The pattern set by these raids would be the model the Spanish would follow for the next decade and beyond. As Bartolome de Las Casas, the most famous of the accompanying Spanish missionaries from that trip recalled:

Once the Indians were in the woods, the next step was to form squadrons and pursue them, and whenever the Spaniards found them, they pitilessly slaughtered everyone like sheep in a corral. It was a general rule among Spaniards to be cruel; not just cruel, but extraordinarily cruel so that harsh and bitter treatment would prevent Indians from daring to think of themselves as human beings or having a minute to think at all. So they would cut an Indian's hands and leave them dangling by a shred of skin and they would send him on saying "Go now, spread the news to your chiefs." They would test their swords and their manly strength on captured Indians and place bets on the slicing off of heads or the cutting of bodies in half with one blow. They burned or hanged captured chiefs."

At least one chief, the man considered by Columbus to be Hispaniola's ranking native leader, was not burned or hanged, however. He was captured, put in chains, and sent off by ship for public display and imprisonment in Spain. Like most of the Indians who had been forced to make that voyage, though, he never made it to Seville: he died en route.

With the same determination Columbus had shown in organizing his troops' previously disorganized and indiscriminate killings, the Admiral then set about the task of systematizing their haphazard enslavement of the natives. Gold was all that they were seeking, so every Indian on the island who was not a child was ordered to deliver to the Spanish a certain amount of the precious ore every three months. When the gold was delivered the individual was presented with a token to wear around his or her neck as proof that the tribute had been paid. Anyone found without the appropriate number of tokens had his hands cut off.

Since Hispaniola's gold supply was far less than what the Spaniards' fantasies suggested, Indians who wished to survive were driven to seek out their quotas of the ore at the expense of other endeavors, including food production. The famines that had begun earlier, when the Indians attempted to hide from the Spanish murderers, now grew much worse, while new diseases that the Spanish carried with them preyed ever more intensely on the malnourished and weakened bodies of the natives. And the soldiers never ceased to take delight in killing just for fun.

Spanish reports of their own murderous sadism during this time are legion. For a lark they "tore babes from their mother's breast by their feet, and dashed their heads against the rocks." The bodies of other infants "they spitted . . . together with their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords." On one famous occasion in Cuba a troop of a hundred or more Spaniards stopped by the banks of a dry river and sharpened their swords on the whetstones in its bed. Eager to compare the sharpness of their blades, reported an

eyewitness to the events, they drew their weapons and began to rip open the bellies, to cut and kill those lambs-men, women, children, and old folk, all of whom were seated, off guard and frightened, watching the mares and the Spaniards. And within two credos, not a man of all of them there remains alive. The Spaniards enter the large house nearby, for this was happening at its door, and in the same way, with cuts and stabs, begin to kill as many as they found there, so that a stream of blood was running, as if a great number of cows had perished.... To see the wounds which covered the bodies of the dead and dying was a spectacle of horror and dread.

This particular slaughter began at the village of Zucayo, where the townsfolk earlier had provided for the conquistadors a feast of cassava, fruit, and fish. From there it spread. No one knows just how many Indians the Spanish killed in this sadistic spree, but Las Casas put the number at well over 20,000 before the soldiers' thirst for horror had been slaked.

Another report, this one by a group of concerned Dominican friars, concentrated on the way the Spanish soldiers treated native infants:

Some Christians encounter an Indian woman, who was carrying in her arms a child at suck; and since the dog they had with them was hungry, they tore the child from the mother's arms and flung it still living to the dog, who proceeded to devour it before the mother's eyes.... When there were among the prisoners some women who had recently given birth, if the new-born babes happened to cry, they seized them by the legs and hurled them against the rocks, or flung them into the jungle so that they would be certain to die there.

Or, Las Casas again, in another incident he witnessed:

The Spaniards found pleasure in inventing all kinds of odd cruelties, the more cruel the better, with which to spill human blood. They built a long gibbet, low enough for the toes to touch the ground and prevent strangling, and hanged thirteen [natives] at a time in honor of Christ Our Saviour and the twelve Apostles. When the Indians were thus still alive and hanging, the Spaniards tested their strength and their blades against them, ripping chests open with one blow and exposing entrails, and there were those who did worse. Then, straw was wrapped around their torn bodies and they were burned alive. One man caught two children about two years old, pierced their throats with a dagger, then hurled them down a precipice.

If some of this has a sickeningly familiar ring to readers who recall the massacres at My Lai and Song My and other Vietnamese villages in the not too distant past, the familiarity is reinforced by the term the Spanish used to describe their campaign of terror: "pacification." But as horrific as those bloodbaths were in Vietnam, in sheer magnitude they were as nothing compared with what happened on the single island of Hispaniola five hundred years ago: the island's population of about eight million people at the time of Columbus's arrival in 1492 already had declined by a third to a half before the year 1496 was out. And after 1496 the death rate, if anything, accelerated.

In plotting on a graph the decline of Hispaniola's native population there appears a curious bulge, around the year 1510, when the diminishing numbers seemed to stabilize and even grow a bit. Then the inexorable downward spiral toward extinction continues. What that little blip on the demographic record indicates is not, however, a moment of respite for the island's people, nor a contradiction to the overall pattern of Hispaniola's population free-fall following Columbus's arrival. Rather, it is a shadowy and passing footnote to the holocaust the Spanish at the same time were bringing to the rest of the Caribbean, for that fleeting instant of population stabilization was caused by the importation of tens of thousands of slaves from surrounding islands in a fruitless attempt by the Spanish to replace the dying natives of Hispaniola.

But death seized these imported slaves as quickly as it had Hispaniola's natives. And thus, the islands of the Bahamas were rapidly stripped of perhaps half a million people, in large part

for use as short-lived replacements by the Spanish for Hispaniola's nearly eradicated indigenous inhabitants. Then Cuba, with its enormous population, suffered the same fate. With the Caribbean's millions of native people thereby effectively liquidated in barely a quarter of a century, forced through the murderous vortex of Spanish savagery and greed, the slavers turned next to the smaller islands off the mainland coast. The first raid took place in 1515 when natives from Guanaja in the Bay Islands off Honduras were captured and taken to forced labor camps in depopulated Cuba. Other slave expeditions followed, and by 1525, when Cortes arrived in the region, all the Bay Islands themselves had been entirely shorn of their inhabitants.

In order to exploit most fully the land and its populace, and to satisfy the increasingly dangerous and rebellion-organizing ambitions of his well-armed Spanish troops, Columbus instituted a program called the repartimiento or "Indian grants"-later referred to, in a revised version, as the system of encomiendas. This was a dividing-up, not of the land, but of entire peoples and communities, and the bestowal of them upon a would-be Spanish master. The master was free to do what he wished with "his people"-have them plant, have them work in the mines, have them do anything, as Carl Sauer puts it, "without limit or benefit of tenure." The result was an even greater increase in cruelty and a magnification of the firestorm of human devastation. Caring only for short-term material wealth that could be wrenched up from the earth, the Spanish overlords on Hispaniola removed their slaves to unfamiliar locales-"the roads to the mines were like anthills," Las Casas recalled-deprived them of food, and forced them to work until they dropped. At the mines and fields in which they labored, the Indians were herded together under the supervision of Spanish overseers, known as mineros in the mines and estancieros on the plantations, who "treated the Indians with such rigor and inhumanity that they seemed the very ministers of Hell, driving them day and night with beatings, kicks, lashes and blows and calling them no sweeter names than dogs." Needless to say, some Indians attempted to escape from this. They were hunted down with mastiffs. When found, if not torn apart on the spot, they were returned and a show-trial was held for them, and for the edification of other Indians who were made to stand and watch. The escapees were brought before the visitador [Spanish inspector-magistrate] and the accuser, that is, the supposedly pious master, who accused them of being rebellious dogs and good-for-nothings and demanded stiff punishment. The visitador then had them tied to a post and he himself, with his own hands, as the most honorable man in town, took a sailor's tarred whip as tough as iron, the kind they use in galleys, and flogged them until blood ran from their naked bodies, mere skin and bones from starvation. Then, leaving them for dead, he stopped and threatened the same punishment if they tried it again.

Occasionally, when slaves were so broken by illness, malnutrition, or exhaustion unto death that they became incapable of further labor output, they were dismissed from the mines or the fields where they worked. Las Casas estimated that perhaps 10 percent of the Indian conscripts survived long enough for this to happen. However, he continued:

When they were allowed to go home, they often found it deserted and had no other recourse than to go out into the woods to find food and to die. When they fell ill, which was very frequently because they are a delicate people unaccustomed to such work, the Spaniards did not believe them and pitilessly called them lazy dogs, and kicked and beat them; and when illness was apparent they sent them home as useless, giving them some cassava for the twenty- to eighty-league journey. They would go then, falling into the first stream and dying there in desperation; others would hold on longer, but very few ever made it home. I sometimes came upon dead bodies on my way, and upon others who were gasping and moaning in their death agony, repeating "Hungry, hungry."

In the face of utter hopelessness, the Indians began simply surrendering their lives. Some committed suicide. Many refused to have children, recognizing that their offspring, even if they successfully endured the Spanish cruelties, would only become slaves themselves. And others, wrote Las Casas, saw that without any offence on their part they were despoiled of their kingdoms, their lands and liberties and of their lives, their wives, and homes. As they saw themselves each day perishing by the cruel and inhuman treatment of the Spaniards, crushed to the earth by the horses, cut in pieces by swords, eaten and torn by dogs, many buried alive and suffering all kinds of exquisite tortures . . . [they] decided to abandon themselves to their unhappy fate with no further struggles, placing themselves in the hands of their enemies that they might do with them as they liked.

Other natives, in time, did find ways to become reunited with whatever remained of their families. But when most wives and husbands were brought back together, they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides that they had no mind for marital communication and in this way they ceased to procreate. As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7,000 babies died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation, while others caused themselves to abort with certain herbs that produced stillborn children. In this way husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk, while others had not time or energy for procreation, and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile, though so unfortunate, was depopulated.

By 1496, we already have noted, the population of Hispaniola had fallen from eight million to between four and five million. By 1508 it was down to less than a hundred thousand. By 1518 it numbered less than twenty thousand. And by 1535, say the leading scholars on this grim topic, "for all practical purposes, the native population was extinct."

In less than the normal lifetime of a single human being, an entire culture of millions of people, thousands of years resident in their homeland, had been exterminated. The same fate befell the native peoples of the surrounding islands in the Caribbean as well. Of all the horrific genocides that have occurred in the twentieth century against Armenians, Jews, Gypsies, Ibos, Bengalis, Timorese, Kampucheans, Ugandans, and more, none has come close to destroying this many-or this great a proportion of wholly innocent people.

And then the Spanish turned their attention to the mainland of Mexico and Central America. The slaughter had barely begun. The exquisite city of Tenochtitlan was next.

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The gratuitous killing and outright sadism that the Spanish soldiers had carried out on Hispaniola and in Central Mexico was repeated in the long march to the south. Numerous reports, from numerous reporters, tell of Indians being led to the mines in columns, chained together at the neck, and decapitated if they faltered. Of children trapped and burned alive in their houses, or stabbed to death because they walked too slowly. Of the routine cutting off of women's breasts, and the tying of heavy gourds to their feet before tossing them to drown in lakes and lagoons. Of babies taken from their mothers' breasts, killed, and left as roadside markers. Of "stray" Indians dismembered and sent back to their villages with their chopped-off hands and noses strung around their necks. Of "pregnant and confined women, children, old men, as many as they could capture," thrown into pits in which stakes had been imbedded and "left stuck on the stakes, until the pits were filled." And much, much more.

One favorite sport of the conquistadors was "dogging." Traveling as they did with packs of armored wolfhounds and mastiffs that were raised on a diet of human flesh and were trained to disembowel Indians, the Spanish used the dogs to terrorize slaves and to entertain the

troops. An entire book, Dogs of the Conquest, has been published recently, detailing the exploits of these animals as they accompanied their masters throughout the course of the Spanish depredations. "A properly fleshed dog," these authors say, "could pursue a 'savage' as zealously and effectively as a deer or a boar.... To many of the conquerors, the Indian was merely another savage animal, and the dogs were trained to pursue and rip apart their human quarry with the same zest as they felt when hunting wild beasts."

Vasco Nunez de Balboa was famous for such exploits and, like others, he had his own favorite dog-Leoncico, or "little lion," a reddish-colored cross between a greyhound and a mastiff-that was rewarded at the end of a campaign for the amount of killing it had done. On one much celebrated occasion, Leoncico tore the head off an Indian leader in Panama while Balboa, his men, and other dogs completed the slaughter of everyone in a village that had the ill fortune to lie in their journey's path. Heads of human adults do not come off easily, so the authors of Dogs of the Conquest seem correct in calling this a "remarkable feat," although Balboa's men usually were able to do quite well by themselves. As one contemporary description of this same massacre notes:

The Spaniards cut off the arm of one, the leg or hip of another, and from some their heads at one stroke, like butchers cutting up beef and mutton for market. Six hundred, including the cacique, were thus slain like brute beasts. ...Vasco ordered forty of them to be torn to pieces by dogs.

Just as the Spanish soldiers seem to have particularly enjoyed testing the sharpness of their yard-long rapier blades on the bodies of Indian children, so their dogs seemed to find the soft bodies of infants especially tasty, and thus the accounts of the invading conquistadors and the padres who traveled with them are filled with detailed descriptions of young Indian children routinely taken from their parents and fed to the hungry animals.

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p85

... overall in central Mexico the population fell by almost 95 percent within seventy-five years following the Europeans' first appearance - from more than 25,000,000 people in 1519 to barely 1,300,000 in 1595.

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For the Andean society as a whole ... within a century following their first encounter with the Spanish, 94-96 percent of their once-enormous population had been exterminated; along their 2000 miles of coastline, where once 6,500,000 people had lived, everyone was dead.

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The earliest European mariners and explorers in California ... repeatedly referred to the great numbers of Indians living there. In places where Vizcaino's ships could approach the coast or his men could go ashore, the Captain recorded, again and again, that the land was thickly filled with people. And where he couldn't approach or go ashore "because the coast was wild," the Indians signaled greetings by building fires-fires that "made so many columns of smoke on the mainland that at night it looked like a procession and in the daytime the sky was overcast." In sum, as Father Ascension put it, "this realm of California is very large and embraces much territory, nearly all inhabited by numberless people."

But not for very long. Throughout the late sixteenth and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Spanish disease and Spanish cruelty took a large but mostly uncalculated toll. Few detailed records of what happened during that time exist, but a wealth of research in other locales has shown the early decades following Western contact to be almost invariably the worst for native people, because that is when the fires of epidemic disease burn most freely.

Whatever the population of California was before the Spanish came, however, and whatever happened during the first few centuries following Spanish entry into the region, by 1845 the Indian population of California had been slashed to 150,000 (down from many times that number prior to European contact) by swarming epidemics of influenza, diphtheria, measles, pneumonia, whooping cough, smallpox, malaria, typhoid, cholera, tuberculosis, dysentery, syphilis, and gonorrhea-along with everyday settler and explorer violence. As late as 1833 a malaria epidemic brought in by some Hudson's Bay Company trappers killed 20,000 Indians by itself, wiping out entire parts of the great central valleys. "A decade later," writes one historian, "there still remained macabre reminders of the malaria epidemic: collapsed houses filled with skulls and bones, the ground littered with skeletal remains."

Terrible as such deaths must have been, if the lives that preceded them were lived outside the Spanish missions that were founded in the eighteenth century, the victims might have counted themselves lucky. Two centuries earlier the Puritan minister John Robinson had complained to Plymouth's William Bradford that although a group of massacred Indians no doubt "deserved" to be killed, "Oh, how happy a thing had it been, if you had converted some before you had killed any!" That was probably the only thing the New England Puritans and California's Spanish Catholics would have agreed upon. So, using armed Spanish troops to capture Indians and herd them into the mission stockades, the Spanish padres did their best to convert the natives before they killed them.

And kill they did. First there were the Jesuit missions, founded early in the eighteenth century, and from which few vital statistics are available. Then the Franciscans took the Jesuits' place. At the mission of Nuestra Senora de Loreto, reported the Franciscan chronicler Father Francisco Palou, during the first three years of Franciscan rule 76 children and adults were baptized, while 131 were buried. At the mission of San Jose Cumundu during the same time period 94 were baptized, while 241 died. At the mission of Purisima de Cadegomo, meanwhile, 39 were baptized-120 died. At the mission of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe the figures were similar: 53 baptisms, 130 deaths. The same held true at others, from the mission of Santa Rosalia de Mulege, with 48 baptisms and 113 deaths, to the mission of San Ignacio, with 115 baptisms and 293 deaths-all within the same initial three-year period.

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By 1845 the Indian population of California was down to no more than a quarter of what it had been when the Franciscan missions were established in 1769. That is, it had declined by at least 75 percent during seventy-five years of Spanish rule. In the course of just the next twenty-five years, under American rule, it would fall by another 80 percent. The gold rush brought to California a flood of American miners and ranchers who seemed to delight in killing Indians, miners and ranchers who rose to political power and prominence-and from those platforms not only legalized the enslavement of California Indians, but, as in Colorado and elsewhere, launched public campaigns of genocide with the explicitly stated goal of all-out Indian extermination.

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Between 1852 and 1860, under American supervision, the indigenous population of California plunged from 85,000 to 35,000, a collapse of about 60 percent within eight years of the first gubernatorial demands for the Indians' destruction. By 1890 that number was halved again: now 80 percent of the natives who had been alive when California became a state had been wiped out by an official policy of genocide. Fewer than 18,000 California Indians were still living, and the number was continuing to drop. In the late 1840s and 1850s one observer of the California scene had watched his fellow American whites begin their furious assault "upon

[the Indians], shooting them down like wolves, men, women, and children, wherever they could find them," and had warned that this "war of extermination against the aborigines, commenced in effect at the landing of Columbus, and continued to this day, [is] gradually and surely tending to the final and utter extinction of the race." While to most white Californians such a conclusion was hardly lamentable, to this commentator it was a major concern-but only because the extermination "policy [has] proved so injurious to the interests of the whites." That was because the Indians' "labor, once very useful, and, in fact, indispensable in a country where no other species of laborers were to be obtained at any price, and which might now be rendered of immense value by pursuing a judicious policy, has been utterly sacrificed by this extensive system of indiscriminate revenge."
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... between 95 and 98 percent of California's Indians had been exterminated in little more than a century. And even this ghastly numerical calculation is inadequate, not only because it reveals nothing of the hideous suffering endured by those hundreds of thousands of California native peoples, but because it is based on decline only from the estimated population for the year 1769-a population that already had been reduced savagely by earlier invasions of European plague and violence. Nationwide by this time only about one-third of one percent of America's population-250,000 out of 76, 000,000 people-were natives. The worst human holocaust the world had ever witnessed, roaring across two continents non-stop for four centuries and consuming the lives of countless tens of millions of people, finally had leveled off. There was, at last, almost no one left to kill.
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p147
During the course of four centuries - from the 1490s to the 1890s - Europeans and white Americans engaged in an unbroken string of genocide campaigns against the native peoples of the Americas.

Sex, Race and Holy War

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... the Jewish Holocaust-the inhuman destruction of 6,000,000 people-was not an abominably unique event.(It was.) So, too, for reasons of its own, was the mass murder of about 1,000,000 Armenians in Turkey a few decades prior to the Holocaust. So, too, was the deliberately caused "terror-famine" in Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930s, which killed more than 14,000,000 people. So, too, have been each of the genocidal slaughters of many millions more, decades after the Holocaust, in Burundi, Bangladesh, Kampuchea, East Timor, the Brazilian Amazon, and elsewhere. Additionally, within the framework of the Holocaust itself, there were aspects that were unique in the campaign of genocide conducted by the Nazis against Europe's Romani (Gypsy) people, which resulted in the mass murder of perhaps 1,500,000 men, women, and children. Of course, there also were the unique horrors of the African slave trade, during the course of which at least 30,000,000-and possibly as many as 40,000,000 to 60,000,000-Africans were killed, most of them in the prime of their lives, before they even had a chance to begin working as human chattel on plantations in the Indies and the Americas. And finally, there is the unique subject of this book, the total extermination of many American Indian peoples and the near-extermination of others, in numbers that eventually totaled close to 100,000,000.

Each of these genocides was distinct and unique, for one reason or another (as were (and are) others that go unmentioned here. In one case the sheer numbers of people killed may make it unique. In another case, the percentage of people killed may make it unique. In still a different case, the greatly compressed time period in which the genocide took place may make it unique. In a further case, the greatly extended time period in which the genocide took place may make it unique. No doubt the targeting of a specific group or groups for extermination by a particular nation's official policy may mark a given genocide as unique. So too might another group's being unofficially (but unmistakably) targeted for elimination by the actions of a multinational phalanx bent on total extirpation. Certainly the chilling utilization of technological instruments of destruction, such as gas chambers, and its assembly-line, bureaucratic, systematic methods of destruction makes the Holocaust unique. On the other hand, the savage employment of non-technological instruments of destruction, such as the unleashing of trained and hungry dogs to devour infants, and the burning and crude hacking to death of the inhabitants of entire cities, also makes the Spanish anti-Indian genocide unique.

A list of distinctions marking the uniqueness of one or another group that has suffered from genocidal mass destruction or near (or total) extermination could go on at length. Additional problems emerge because of a looseness in the terminology commonly used to describe categories and communities of genocidal victims. A traditional Eurocentric bias that lumps undifferentiated masses of "Africans" into one single category and undifferentiated masses of "Indians" into another, while making fine distinctions among the different populations of Europe, permits the ignoring of cases in which genocide against Africans and American Indians has resulted in the total extermination-purposefully carried out-of entire cultural, social, religious, and ethnic groups.

A secondary tragedy of all these genocides, moreover, is that partisan representatives among the survivors of particular afflicted groups not uncommonly hold up their peoples' experience as so fundamentally different from the others that not only is scholarly comparison rejected out of hand, but mere cross-referencing or discussion of other genocidal events within the context of their own flatly is prohibited. It is almost as though the preemptive conclusion that one's own group has suffered more than others is something of a horrible award of distinction that will be diminished if the true extent of another group's suffering is acknowledged.

... despite an often expressed contempt for Christianity, in Mein Kampf Hitler had written that his plan for a triumphant Nazism was modeled on the Catholic Church's traditional "tenacious adherence to dogma" and its "fanatical intolerance," particularly in the Church's past when, as Arno J. Mayer has noted, Hitler observed approvingly that in "building 'its own altar,' Christianity had not hesitated to 'destroy the altars of the heathen.' ', 15 Had Hitler required supporting evidence for this contention he would have needed to look no further than the Puritans' godly justifications for exterminating New England's Indians in the seventeenth century or, before that, the sanctimonious Spanish legitimation of genocide, as ordained by Christian Truth, in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Meso- and South America. (It is worth noting also that the Fuhrer from time to time expressed admiration for the "efficiency" of the American genocide campaign against the Indians, viewing it as a forerunner for his own plans and programs.) But the roots of the tradition run far deeper than that-back to the high Middle Ages and before-when at least part of the Christians' willingness to destroy the infidels who lived in what was considered to be a spiritual wilderness was rooted in a rabid need to kill the sinful wilderness that lived within themselves. To understand the horrors that were inflicted by Europeans and white Americans on the Indians of the Americas it is necessary to begin with a look at the core of European thought and culture-Christianity-and in particular its ideas on sex and race and violence.

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From the moment of its birth Christianity had envisioned the end of the world. Saints and theologians differed on many details about the end, but few disagreements were as intense as those concerned with the nature and timing of the events involved. There were those who believed that as the end drew near conditions on earth would grow progressively dire, evil would increase, love would diminish, the final tribulations would be unleashed-and then suddenly the Son of Man would appear: he would overcome Satan, judge mankind, and bring an end to history. Others had what is generally thought to be a more optimistic view: before reaching the final grand conclusion, they claimed, there would be a long reign of peace, justice, abundance, and bliss; the Jews would be converted, while the heathens would be either converted or annihilated; and, in certain versions of the prophecy, this Messianic Age of Gold would be ushered in by a Last World Emperor-a human saviour-who would prepare the way for the final cataclysmic but glorious struggle between Good and Evil, whereupon history would end with the triumphant Second Coming.

Among the innumerable forecasters of the end of time who adopted a variation that combined elements of both versions of the prophecy was the twelfth-century Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore. Joachim's ideas became much more influential than most, however, largely because they were adopted and transmitted by the Spiritual branch of the Church's Franciscan Order during the thirteenth through the fifteenth century. He and his followers made calculations from evidence contained in Scriptural texts, calculations purporting to show that the sequence of events leading to the end of time would soon be-or perhaps already was-appearing. As word of these predictions spread, the most fundamental affairs of both Church and state were affected. And there had been no previous time in human history when ideas were able to circulate further or more rapidly, for it was in the late 1430s that Johann Gutenberg developed the technique of printing with movable type cast in molds. It has been estimated that as many as 20 million books-and an incalculable number of pamphlets and tracts-were produced and distributed in Europe between just 1450 and 1500."

The fifteenth century in Italy was especially marked by presentiments that the end was near, as Marjorie Reeves has shown in exhaustive detail, with "general anxiety . . . building up to a peak in the 1480s and 1490s." Since at least the middle of the century, the streets of Florence, Rome, Milan, Siena, and other Italian cities-including Genoa, where Columbus was born and spent his youth-had been filled with wandering prophets, while popular tracts were being published and distributed by the tens of thousands, and "astrological prognostications were sweeping" the country. "The significant point to grasp," Reeves demonstrates, "is that we are not dealing here with two opposed viewpoints or groups-optimistic humanists hailing the Age of Gold on the one hand, and medieval-style prophets and astrologers proclaiming 'Woe!' on the other." Rather, "foreboding and great hope lived side by side in the same people.... Thus the Joachimist marriage of woe and exaltation exactly fitted the mood of late fifteenth-century Italy, where the concept of a humanist Age of Gold had to be brought into relation with the ingrained expectation of Antichrist."

The political implications of this escalating fever of both disquietude and anticipation grew out of the fact that Joachim and those who were popularizing his ideas placed the final struggle between ultimate good and ultimate evil after the blissful Golden Age. Thus, "Joachim's central message remained his affirmation of a real-though incomplete-achievement of peace and beatitude within history," a belief that, in the minds of many, "was quickly vulgarized into dreams of world-wide empire." Different European nations and their leaders, naturally, tried to claim this mantle- and with it the title of Messiah-Emperor-as their own. But a prominent follower of Joachim in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century, Arnold of Villanova, had

prophesied that the man who would lead humanity to its glorious new day would come from Spain. As we shall see, Columbus knew of this prophecy (though he misidentified it with Joachim himself) and spoke and wrote of it, but he was not alone; for, in the words of Leonard I. Sweet, as the fifteenth century was drawing to a close the Joachimite scheme regarding the end of time "burst the bounds of Franciscan piety to submerge Spanish society in a messianic milieu."

To a stranger visiting Europe during these years, optimism would seem the most improbable of attitudes. For quite some time the war with the infidel had been going rather badly; indeed, as one historian has remarked: "as late as 1490 it would have seemed that in the eight-centuries-old struggle between the Cross and the Crescent, the latter was on its way to final triumph. The future seemed to lie not with Christ but with the Prophet." At the end of the thirteenth century Jaffa and Antioch and Tripoli and Acre, the last of the Christian strongholds in the Holy Land, had fallen to the Muslims, and in 1453 Constantinople had been taken by Sultan Muhammed II. Despite all the rivers of blood that had been shed since the days of the first Crusade, the influence of Christianity at this moment in time was confined once again to the restricted boundaries of Europe. And within those boundaries things were not going well, either.

Since the late fourteenth century, when John Wyclif and his followers in England had publicly attacked the Church's doctrine of transubstantiation and claimed that all godly authority resided in the Scriptures and not to any degree in the good offices of the Church, the rumblings of reformation had been evident. In the fifteenth century the criticism continued, from a variety of directions and on a variety of matters. On one side, for instance, there was John Huss, an advocate of some of Wyclif's views and a critic of papal infallibility and the practice of granting indulgences. For his troubles, in 1415 Huss was burned at the stake-after the Inquisitors first stripped him of his vestments, cut the shape of a cross in his hair, and placed on his head a conical paper hat painted with pictures of devils- following which war broke out between Hussites and Catholics, war in which politics and religion were inextricably intertwined, and war that continued throughout most of the fifteenth century...

The papacy itself, meanwhile, recently had suffered through forty years of the so-called Great Schism, during which time there were two and even three rival claimants as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. After the schism was ended at the Council of Constance in 1418, for the rest of the century the papacy's behavior and enduring legacy continued to be one of enormous extravagance and moral corruption. As many of the late Middle Ages' "most pious minds" long had feared, observes the great historian of the Inquisition, Henry Charles Lea, "Christianity was practically a failure . . . The Church, instead of elevating man, had been dragged down to his level." This, of course, only further fanned the hot embers of reformation which would burst into flame during the first decades of the century to follow.

On the level of everyday life, we saw in an earlier chapter the atrocious conditions under which most of the peoples of Europe were forced to live as the late Middle Ages crept forward. It was only a hundred years before Columbus's mid-fifteenth-century birth that the Black Death had shattered European society along with enormous masses of its population. Within short order millions had died-about one out of every three people across the entirety of Europe was killed by the pandemic-and recovery was achieved only with excruciating slowness. "Those few discreet folk who remained alive," recalled the Florentine historian Matteo Villani, "expected many things":

They believed that those whom God's grace had saved from death, having beheld the destruction of their neighbours . . . would become better conditioned, humble, virtuous and Catholic; that they would guard themselves from iniquity and sin and would be full of love and charity towards one another. But no sooner had the plague ceased than we saw the contrary .

. . [People] gave themselves up to a more shameful and disordered life than they had led before.... Men thought that, by reason of the fewness of mankind, there should be abundance of all produce of the land; yet, on the contrary, by reason of men's ingratitude, everything came to unwonted scarcity and remained long thus; nay, in certain countries . . . there were grievous and unwonted famines. Again, men dreamed of wealth and abundance ~n garments . . . yet, in fact, things turned out widely different, for most commodities were more costly, by twice or more, than before the plague And the price of labour and the work of all trades and crafts, rose in disorderly fashion beyond the double. Lawsuits and disputes and quarrels and riots rose elsewhere among citizens in every land.

Modern historical analysis has, in general terms, confirmed Villani's description, with one important difference: it was far too sanguine. For example, although wages did increase in the century immediately following the explosion of the plague in the middle of the fourteenth century, after that time they spiraled drastically downward. The real wages of a typical English carpenter serve as a vivid point of illustration: between 13S0 and 1450 his pay increased by about 64 percent; then his wages started falling precipitously throughout the entirety of the next two centuries, at last bottoming out at approximately half of what they had been at the outbreak of the plague in 1348, fully three centuries earlier. Meanwhile, during this same period, prices of foodstuffs and other commodities were soaring upward at an equivalent rate and more, ultimately achieving a 500 percent overall increase during the sixteenth century. The combination of simultaneously collapsing wages and escalating prices in an already devastated social environment was bad enough for an English carpenter, but English carpenters were by no means poorly off compared with other laborers in Europe-and other laborers were positively well off compared with the starving multitudes who had no work at all.

At the same time that the Black Death was wiping out a third of Europe's population, and bouts of famine were destroying many thousands more with each incident, the Hundred Years War was raging; it began in 1337 and did not end until 1453. And while the war was on, marauding bands of discharged soldiers turned brigands and highwaymen-aptly named ecorcheurs or "flayers"-were raping and pillaging the countryside. Finally, the requirements of a war economy forced governments to increase taxes. Immanuel Wallerstein explains how it all added up:

The taxes, coming on top of already heavy feudal dues, were too much for the producers, creating a liquidity crisis which in turn led to a return to indirect taxes and taxes in kind. Thus started a downward cycle: The fiscal burden led to a reduction in consumption which led to a reduction in production and money circulation which increased further the liquidity difficulties which led to royal borrowing and eventually the insolvency of the limited royal treasuries, which in turn created a credit crisis, leading to hoarding of bullion, which in turn upset the pattern of international trade. A rapid rise in prices occurred, further reducing the margin of subsistence, and this began to take its toll in population.

In sum, all the while that the popes and other elites were indulging themselves in profligacy and decadence, the basic political and economic frameworks of Europe-to say nothing of the entire social order-were in a state of near collapse. Certain states, of course, were worse off than others, and there are various ways in which such comparative misery can be assayed. One measure that we shall soon see has particular relevance for what happened in the aftermath of Columbus's voyages to the New World ~s the balance and nature of intra-European trade. In England and northwestern Europe generally legislative and other efforts during this time

Discouraged the export of raw materials such as wool in the case of England and encouraged the export of manufactured goods. Thus, by the close of the fifteenth century Britain was exporting 50,000 bolts of cloth annually rising to more than two and a half times that figure

within the next five decades. Spain and Portugal at the same time remained exporters of raw materials (wool, iron ore, salt oil and other items) and importers of textiles hardwares and other manufactured products. The Iberian nations with their backward and inflexible economic systems were rapidly becoming economic dependencies of the expanding-if themselves still impoverished-early capitalist states of northwest Europe.

This then was the Old World on the eve of Columbus's departure in 1492. For almost half a millennium Christians had been launching hideously destructive holy wars and massive enslavement campaigns against external enemies they viewed as carnal demons and described as infidels- all m an effort to recapture the Holy Land and all of which, it now seemed to many effectively had come to naught. During those same long centuries they had further expressed their ruthless intolerance of all persons and thugs that were non-Christian by conducting pogroms against the Jews who lived among them and whom they regarded as the embodiment of

the Antichrist imposing torture exile and mass destruction on those who refused to succumb to evangelical persuasion. These great efforts too, appeared to have largely failed. Hundreds of thousands of openly practicing Jews remained in the Europeans' midst, and even those who had converted were suspected of being the Devil's agents and spies treacherously boring from within them.

Dominated by a theocratic culture and world view that for a thousand years and more had been obsessed with things sensual and sexual, and had demonstrated its obsession in the only way its priesthood permitted-by intense and violent sensual and sexual repression and "purification"-the religious mood of Christendom's people at this moment was near the boiling point. At its head the Church was mired in corruption, while the ranks below were disappointed and increasingly disillusioned. These are the sorts of conditions that, given the proper spark lend themselves to what anthropologists and historians describe as "millenarian" rebellion and upheaval or revitalization movements." In point of fact this historical moment seen m retrospect, was the inception of the Reformation which means that it truly was nothing less than the eve of a massive revolution. And when finally that revolution did explode, Catholic would kill Protestant and Protestant would kill Catholic with the same zeal and ferocity that their common Christian ancestors had reserved for Muslims and Jews.

Don t let them live any longer the evil-doers who turn us away from God " the Protestant radical Thomas Muntzer soon would be crying to his followers. "For a godless man"-he was referring to Catholics-has no right to live if he hinders the godly.... The sword is necessary to exterminate them.... If they resist, let them be slaughtered without mercy.

And, again and again, that is precisely what happened: Catholics were indeed slaughtered without mercy. The Church, of course, was more than eager to return such compliments in deed as well as in word. Thus, for instance, Catholic vengeance against Calvinists in sixteenth-century France resulted in the killing of thousands. Infants were stabbed to death, women had their hands cut off to remove gold bracelets, publishers of heretical works were burned to death atop bonfires made from their books. The treatment of Gaspard de Coligny, a Protestant leader was not atypical after murdering him the Catholic mob mutilated his body, cutting off his head, his hands, and his genitals-and then dragged it through the streets, set fire to it and dumped it in the river.... [B]ut then deciding that it was not worthy of being food for the fish, they hauled it out again ... [and] dragged what was left of the body to the gallows of Montfaucon, 'to be meat and carrion for maggots and crows.' Such furious rage continued well into the seventeenth century, as, for example, m the Catholic sacking of the Protestant city of Magdeburg, when at least 30 000 Protestants were slain: "In a single church fifty-three women were found beheaded," reported Friedrich Schiller while elsewhere babies were stabbed and thrown into fires. "Horrible and revolting to humanity was the scene that

presented itself," Schiller wrote, "the living crawling from under the dead, children wandering about with heart-rending cries, calling for their parents; and infants still sucking the breasts of their lifeless mothers.

And this was Christian against Christian. European against European. "Civilized" against "civilized." There were all Europeans knew "wild" races, carnal and un-Christian and uncivilized who lived m as-yet unexplored lands on the far distant margins of the earth. Some of them were beasts, some of them were human, and some of them hovered in the darkness in between. One day-perhaps one day soon-they would be encountered and important decisions would then have to be made. If they possessed souls, if they were capable of understanding and embracing the holy faith, every effort would be made to convert them-just as every effort had always been made to convert Muslims and Jews. If they proved incapable of conversion, if they had no souls-if they were, that as children of the Devil-they would be slain. God demanded as much.

For this era in the history of Christian Europe appeared to many to be the threshold of the end of time. Three of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse clearly were loose in the land: the rider on the red horse who is war, the rider on the black horse who is famine; and the rider on the pale horse, who is death. Only the rider on the white horse-who in most interpretations of the biblical allegory is Christ-had not yet made his presence known. And, although the signs were everywhere that the time of his return was not far off, it remained his godly children's responsibility to prepare the way for him.

Before Christ would return, all Christians knew, the gospel had to be spread throughout the entire world, and the entire world was not yet known. Spreading the gospel throughout the world meant acceptance of its message by all the world's people, once they had been located-and that in turn meant the total conversion or extermination of all non-Christians. It also meant the liberation of Zion, symbol of the Holy Land, and it likely meant the discovery of the earthly paradise as well.

Christopher Columbus knew all these things. Indeed, as we soon shall see, he was obsessed by them. In her own way, Isabella, the queen of Spain, shared his grandiose vision and his obsession. Still, in his first approach to the Spanish court in 1486, seeking support for his planned venture, he had been rebuffed. It was, in retrospect, understandable. Spain was at that moment engaged intensely in its war with the Moors in Granada. The Crown was impoverished. And Columbus offered a far from secure investment. Five years later, however, the king and queen relented. The reason for their change of heart in 1491 has never been made entirely clear, but Isabella's unquenchable thirst for victory over Islam almost certainly was part of the equation. "A successful voyage would bring Spain into contact with the nations of the East, whose help was needed in the struggle with the Turk," writes J.H. Elliott. "It might also, with luck, bring back Columbus by way of Jerusalem, opening up a route for attacking the Ottoman Empire in the rear. Isabella was naturally attracted, too, by the possibility of laying the foundations of a great Christian mission in the East. In the climate of intense religious excitement which characterized the last months of the Grenada campaign even the wildest projects suddenly seemed possible of accomplishment."

And then, on January 2, 1492, the Muslims who controlled Granada surrendered. The first real victory of Christian over infidel in a very long time, dearly it was a sign that God looked favorably upon the decision to fund the enterprise of the man whose given name meant "Christ-bearer." On March 30th of that year the Jews of Spain were allowed four months to convert to Catholicism or suffer expulsion-an ultimatum the Moors also would be presented with before the following decade had ended. And on April 30th, one month later, a royal decree was issued suspending all Judicial proceedings against any criminals who would agree to ship out with Columbus, because, the document stated, "it is said that it is necessary

to grant safe-conduct to the persons who might join him, since under no other conditions would they be willing to sail with him on the said voyage." With the exception of four men wanted for murder, no known felons accepted the offer. From what historians have been able to tell, the great majority of the crews of the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria-together probably numbering a good deal fewer than a hundred-were not at that moment being pursued by the law, although, no doubt, they were a far from genteel lot.
The three small ships left the harbor at Palos ... The world would never again be the same: before long, the bloodbath would begin.
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... during most of the sixteenth century the Old World was awash in what military historian Robert L. O'Connell calls a "harvest of blood," as European killed European with an extraordinary unleashing of passion. And, of course, Spain was in the thick of it.
In 1568, to cite but one example among many, Philip ordered the duke of Alva-"probably the finest soldier of his day," says O'Connell, "and certainly the cruelest"-to the Netherlands, where Philip was using the Inquisition to root out and persecute Protestants. The duke promptly passed a death sentence upon the entire population of the Netherlands: "he would have utter submission or genocide," O'Connell writes, "and the veterans of Spain stood ready to enforce his will." Massacre followed upon massacre, on one occasion leading to the mass drowning of 6000 to 7000 Netherlanders, "a disaster which the burghers of Emden first realized when several thousand broad-brimmed Dutch hats floated by."
As with most of his other debts, Philip did not pay his soldiers on time, if at all, which created ruptures in discipline and converted the Spanish troops into angry marauders who compensated themselves with whatever they could take. As O'Connell notes:
Gradually, it came to be understood that should the Spanish succeed in taking a town, the population and its possessions would constitute, in essence, the rewards. So it was that, as the [Netherlands] revolt dragged on, predatory behavior reinforced by economic self-interest came to assume a very pure form. Thus, in addition to plunder, not only did the slaughter of adult males and ritual rape of females increasingly become routine, but other more esoteric acts began to crop up. Repeatedly, according to John Motley, Spanish troops took to drinking the blood of their victims ....
If this was the sort of thing that became routine within Europe-as a consequence of "predatory behavior reinforced by economic self-interest" on the part of the Spanish troops-little other than unremitting genocide could be expected from those very same troops when they were loosed upon native peoples in the Caribbean and Meso- and South America- peoples considered by the soldiers, as by most of their priestly and secular betters, to be racially inferior, un-Christian, carnal beasts, or, at best, in Bernardino de Minaya's words quoted earlier, "a third species of animal between man and monkey" that was created by God specifically to provide slave labor for Christian caballeros and their designated representatives. Indeed, ferocious and savage though Spanish violence in Europe was during the sixteenth century, European contemporaries of the conquistadors well recognized that by "serving as an outlet for the energies of the unruly," in J.H. Elliott's words, the New World saved Europe, and Spain itself, from even worse carnage. "It is an established fact," the sixteenth century Frenchman Henri de la Popeliniere wrote with dry understatement, "that if the Spaniard had not sent to the Indies discovered by Columbus all the rogues in his realm, and especially those who refused to return to their ordinary employment after the wars of Granada against the Moors, these would have stirred up the country or given rise to certain novelties in Spain."

To the front-line Spanish troops, then, once they had conquered and stolen from the Indians all the treasure the natives had accumulated for themselves, the remaining indigenous population represented only an immense and bestial labor force to be used by the Christians to pry gold and silver from the earth. Moreover, so enormous was the native population- at least during the early years of each successive stage in the overall conquest-that the terrorism of torture, mutilation, and mass murder was the simplest means for motivating the Indians to work; and for the same reason-the seemingly endless supply of otherwise superfluous population- the cheapest way of maximizing their profits was for the conquistadors to work their Indian slaves until they dropped. Replacing the dead with new captives, who themselves could be worked to death, was far cheaper than feeding and caring for a long-term resident slave population.
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Just as social thought does not bloom in a political vacuum ... neither do institutions come into being and sustain themselves without the inspiration of economic or political necessity. In sixteenth-century Spain, as we have seen that necessity was created by an impoverished and financially dependent small nation that made itself into an empire, an empire that engaged in ambitious wars of expansion (and vicious Inquisitorial repression of suspected non-believers within), but an empire with a huge and gaping hole in its treasury: no sooner were gold or silver deposited than they drained away to creditors. The only remedy for this, since control of expenditures did not fit with imperial visions, was to accelerate the appropriation of wealth. And this demanded the theft and mining of more and more New World gold and silver.
... As with Hispaniola, Tenochtitlan, Cuzco, and elsewhere, the Spaniards' mammoth destruction of whole societies generally was a by-product of conquest and native enslavement, a genocidal means to an economic end, not an end in itself. And therein lies the central difference between the genocide committed by the Spanish and that of the Anglo-Americans: in British America extermination was the primary goal, and it was so precisely because it made economic sense.
... By the close of the sixteenth century bullion, primarily silver, made up more than 95 percent of all exports leaving Spanish America for Europe. Nearly that same percentage of the indigenous population had been destroyed in the process of seizing those riches. In its insatiable hunger, Spain
was devouring all that was of most value in its conquered New World ~J territories-the fabulous wealth in people, culture, and precious metals that \ had so excited the European imagination in the heady era that immediately followed Columbus's return from his first voyage. The number of indigenous people in the Caribbean and Meso- and South America in 1492 probably had been at least equal to that of all Europe, including Russia, at the time. Not much more than a century later it was barely equal to that of England. Entire rich and elaborate and ancient cultures had been erased from the face of the earth.
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The story of British conquest and colonization in North America is, in economic terms, almost precisely the opposite of Spain's experience to the south. In the north, without a cornucopia of treasure to devour and people to exploit, the English were forced to engage in endeavors that led to long-term development rather than short-term growth, particularly in New England. Far fewer native people greeted the British explorers and colonists than had welcomed the Spanish, in part because the population of the continent north of Mexico had always been smaller and less densely settled, and in part because by the time British colonists arrived European diseases had had more time to spread and destroy large numbers of Indians in

Virginia, New England, and beyond. These regions also contained nothing even remotely comparable to the exportable mineral wealth the Spanish had found in the areas they invaded. The most the northern climes had to offer in this regard was fish. To be sure, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the English imported huge amounts of cod from America's North Atlantic waters, and later tobacco and furs were brought in. But fish, tobacco, and furs were not the same as gold or silver.

Nevertheless, despite the very dissimilar economic and native demographic situations they found, the British wasted little time in exterminating the indigenous people. The English and later the Americans, in fact, destroyed at least as high a percentage of the Indians they encountered as earlier had the Spanish, probably higher; it was only their means and motivation that contrasted with those of the conquistadors.

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In recent years some historians have begun pointing out that the British colonists in Virginia and New England greatly intensified their hostility toward and their barbarous treatment of the Indians as time wore on. One of the principal causes of this change in temperament, according to these scholars, was the Europeans' realization that the native people were going to persist in their reluctance to adopt English religious and cultural habits, no matter how intense the British efforts to convert them...

... the Europeans' predisposition to racist enmity regarding the Indians had long been both deeply embedded in Western thought and was intimately entwined with attitudes toward nature, sensuality, and the body. That there were some Europeans who appreciated and even idealized native cultural values-and some settlers who ran off to live with the Indians because they found their lifeways preferable to their own-is undeniable. But these were rarities, and rarities with little influence, within a steadily rising floodtide of racist opinion to the contrary.

What in fact was happening in those initial years of contact between the British and America's native peoples was a classic case of self-fulfilling prophecy, though one with genocidal consequences. Beginning with a false prejudgment of the Indians as somehow other than conventionally human in European terms (whether describing them as living "after the manner of the Golden Age" or as "wild beasts and unreasonable creatures"), everything the Indians did that marked them as incorrigibly non-European and non-Christian-and therefore permanently non-civilized n British eyes-enhanced their definitionally less -than-human status. Treating them according to this false definition naturally brought on a resentful response from the Indians-one which only "proved" (albeit spuriously) that the definition had been valid from the start. In his famous study of this phenomenon Robert K. Merton-after quoting the sociological dictum that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences"-pointed out that "the specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error." In the early and subsequent years of British-Indian contact, however, it produced and perpetuated a reign of terror because it was bound up with an English lust for power, land, and wealth, and because the specific characteristics that the English found problematic in the Indians were attributes that fit closely with ancient but persistently held ideas about the anti-Christian hallmarks of infidels, witches, and wild men.

It was only to be expected, therefore, that when the witchcraft crisis at Salem broke out as the seventeenth century was ending, it would be blamed by New England's foremost clergyman on "the Indians, whose chief Sagamores are well known unto some our Captives, to have been horrid Sorcerers, and hellish Conjurers, and such as Conversed with Daemons." Indeed, as Richard Slotkin has shown, the fusion of the satanic and the native in the minds of the English settlers by this time had become so self-evident as to require no argument. Thus,

when a young woman named Mercy Short became possessed by the Devil, she described the beast who had visited her as "a wretch no taller than an ordinary Walking-Staff; he was not of a Negro, but of a Tawney, or an Indian colour; he wore a high-crowned Hat, with straight Hair; and had one Cloven-foot." Observes Slotkin: "He was, in fact, a figure out of the American Puritan nightmare . . . Indian-colored, dressed in a Christian's hat, with a beast s foot-a kind of Indian-Puritan, man-animal half-breed.
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... Probably never before in Christian history had the idea that humankind was naturally corrupt and debased reached and influenced the daily lives of a larger proportion of the lay community than during New England's seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.
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... from the earliest days of settlement the British colonists repeatedly expressed a haunting fear that they would be "contaminated" by the presence of the Indians, a contamination that must be avoided lest it become the beginning of a terrifying downward slide toward their own bestial degeneration. Thus, unlike the Spanish before them, British men in the colonies from the Carolinas to New England rarely engaged in sexual relations with the Indians, even during those times when there were few if any English women available. Legislation was passed that "banished forever" such mixed race couples, referring to their offspring in animalistic terms as "abominable mixture and spurious issue," though even without formal prohibitions such intimate encounters were commonly "reckoned a horrid crime with us," in the words of one colonial Pennsylvanian." It is little wonder, then, that Mercy Short described the creature that possessed her as both a demon and, in Slotkin's words, "a kind of Indian-Puritan, man-animal half-breed," for this was the ultimate and fated consequence of racial contamination.
Again, however, such theological, psychological, and legislative preoccupations did not proceed to the rationalization of genocide without a social foundation and impetus. And if possessive and tightly constricted attitude toward sex, an abhorrence of racial intermixture, and a belief in humankind's innate depravity had for centuries been hallmarks of Christianity and therefore of the West's definition of civilization, by the time the British exploration and settlement of America had begun, the very essence of humanity also was coming to be associated in European thought with a similarly possessive, exclusive, and constricted attitude toward property. For it is precisely of this time that R.H. Tawney was writing when he observed the movement away from the earlier medieval belief that "private property is a necessary institution, at least in a fallen world . . . but it is to be tolerated as a concession to human frailty, not applauded as desirable in itself," to the notion that "the individual is absolute master of his own, and, within the limits set by positive law, may exploit it with a single eye to his pecuniary advantage, unrestrained by any obligation to postpone his own profit to the well-being of his neighbors, or to give account of his actions to a higher authority." The concept of private property as a positive good and even an insignia of civilization took hold among both Catholics and Protestants during the sixteenth century. Thus, for example, in Spain, Juan Gines de Sepulveda argued that the absence of private property was one of the characteristics of people lacking "even vestiges of humanity," and in Germany at the same time Martin Luther was contending "that the possession of private property was an essential difference between men and beasts." In England, meanwhile, Sir Thomas More was proclaiming that land justifiably could be taken from "any people [who] holdeth a piece of ground void and vacant to no good or profitable use," an idea that also was being independently advanced in other countries by Calvin, Melanchthon, and others. Typically, though, none was as churlish as Luther, who pointed out that the Catholic St. Francis had urged his followers to get rid of their property and give it to the poor: "I do not maintain that St.

Francis was simply wicked," wrote Luther, "but his works show that he was a weak-minded and freakish man, or to say the truth, a fool."
The idea that failure to put property to "good or profitable use" was grounds for seizing it became especially popular with Protestants, who thereby advocated confiscating the lands owned by Catholic monks. As Richard Schlatter explains:
The monks were condemned, not for owning property, but because they did not use that property in an economically productive fashion. At best they used it to produce prayers. Luther and the other Reformation leaders insisted that it should be used, not to relieve men from the necessity of working, but as a tool for making more goods. The attitude of the Reformation was practically, "not prayers, but production." And production, not for consumption, but for more production.
The idea of production for the sake of production, of course, was one of the central components of what Max Weber was to call the Protestant Ethic.
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As early as the first explorations at Roanoke, Thomas Hariot had observed that whenever the English visited an Indian village, "within a few days after our departure . . . the people began to die very fast, and many in a short space: in some towns about twenty, in some forty, in some sixty, and in one six score, which in truth was very many in respect of their numbers." As usual, the British were unaffected by these mysterious plagues. In initial explanation, Hariot could only report that "some astrologers, knowing of the Eclipse of the Sun, which we saw the same year before on our voyage thitherward," thought that might have some bearing on the matter. But such events as solar eclipses and comets (which Hariot also mentions as possibly having some relevance) were, like the epidemics themselves, the work of God. No other interpretation was possible. And that was why, before long, Hariot also was reporting that there seemed to be a divinely drawn pattern to the diseases: miraculously, he said, they affected only those Indian communities "where we had any subtle device practiced against us." In other words, the Lord was selectively punishing only those Indians who plotted against the English.
Needless to say, the reverse of that logic was equally satisfying-that is, that only those Indians who went unpunished were not evil. And if virtually all were punished? The answer was obvious. As William Bradford was to conclude some years later when epidemics almost totally destroyed the Indian population of Plymouth Colony, without affecting the English: "It pleased God to visit these Indians with a great sickness and such a mortality that of a thousand, above nine and a half hundred of them died, and many of them did rot above the ground for want of burial." All followers of the Lord could only give thanks to "the marvelous goodness and providence of God," Bradford concluded. It was a refrain that soon would be heard throughout the land. After all, prior to the Europeans' arrival, the New World had been but "a hideous and desolate wilderness," Bradford said elsewhere, a land "full of wild beasts and wild men." In killing the Indians in massive numbers, then, the English were only doing their sacred duty, working hand in hand with the God who was protecting them.
For nothing else, only divine intervention, could account for the "prodigious Pestilence" that repeatedly swept the land of nineteen out of every twenty Indian inhabitants, wrote Cotton Mather, "so that the Woods were almost cleared of these pernicious Creatures, to make room for a better Growth." Often this teamwork of God and man seemed to be perfection itself, as in King Philip's War. Mather recalled that in one battle of that war the English attacked the native people with such ferocity that "their city was laid in ashes. Above twenty of their chief captains were killed; a proportionable desolation cut off the interior salvages; mortal sickness,

and horrid famine pursued the remainders of 'em, so we can hardly tell where any of 'em are left alive upon the face of the earth."
Thus the militant agencies of God and his chosen people became as one. Mather believed, with many others, that at some time in the distant past the "miserable salvages" known as Indians had been "decoyed" by the Devil to live in isolation in America "in hopes that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would never come here to destroy or disturb his absolute empire over them.'" But God had located the evil brutes and sent his holiest Christian warriors over from England where-with the help of some divinely sprinkled plagues - they joyously had "Irradiated an Indian wilderness." It truly was, as another New England saint entitled his own history of the holy settlement, a "wonder-working providence."
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Again and again the explanatory circle closed upon itself. Although they carried with them the same thousand years and more of repressed, intolerant, and violent history that earlier had guided the conquistadors, in their explorations and settlements the English both left behind and confronted before them very different material worlds than had the Spanish. For those who were their victims it didn't matter very much. In addition to being un-Christian, the Indians were uncivilized and perhaps not even fully human. The English had been told that by the Spanish, but there were many other proofs of it; one was the simple fact (untrue, but that was immaterial) that the natives "roamed" the woods like wild beasts, with no understanding of private property holdings or the need to make "improvements" on the land. In their generosity the Christian English would bring to these benighted creatures the word of Christ and guidance out of the dark forest of their barbarism. For these great gifts the English only demanded in return-it was, after all, their God-given right-whatever land they felt they needed, to bound and fence at will, and quick capitulation to their religious ways.
In fact, no serious effort ever was made by the British colonists or their ministers to convert the Indians to the Christian faith. Nor were the Indians especially receptive to the token gestures that were proffered: they were quite content with their peoples' ancient ways.' In addition, it was not long before the English had outworn their welcome with demands for more and more of the natives' ancestral lands. Failure of the Indians to capitulate in either the sacred or the secular realms, however, was to the English all the evidence they needed-indeed, all that they were seeking- to prove that in their dangerous and possibly contaminating bestiality the natives were an incorrigible and inferior race. But God was making a place for his Christian children in this wilderness by slaying the Indians with plagues of such destructive power that only in the Bible could precedents for them be found. His divine message was too plain for misinterpretation. And the fact that it fit so closely with the settlers' material desires only made it all the more compelling. There was little hope for these devil's helpers of the forest. God's desire, proved by his unleashing wave upon wave of horrendous pestilence-and pestilence that killed selectively only Indians-was a command to the saints to join his holy war.
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Thomas Jefferson's first inaugural address delivered less than two centuries since the founding of the first permanent English colomes:
A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of the mortal eye-when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue, and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.

It was in pursuit of these and other grand visions that Jefferson later would write of the remaining Indians in America that the government was obliged "now to pursue them to extermination, or drive them to new seats beyond our reach." For the native peoples of Jefferson's "rising nation," of his "beloved country"-far from being Bolivar's "legitimate owners"- were in truth, most Americans believed, little more than dangerous wolves. Andrew Jackson said this plainly in urging American troops to root out from their "dens" and kill Indian women and their "whelps," adding in his second annual message to Congress that while some people tended to grow "melancholy" over the Indians' being driven by white Americans to their "tomb," an understanding of "true philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one generation to make room for another."
Before either Jefferson or Jackson, George Washington, the father of the country, had said much the same thing: the Indians were wolves and beasts who deserved nothing from the whites but "total ruin." And Washington himself was only repeating what by then was a very traditional observation. Less than a decade after the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, for example, it was made illegal to "shoot off a gun on any unnecessary occasion, or at any game except an Indian or a wolf." As Barry Lopez has noted, this was far from a single-incident comparison. So alike did Indians and wolves appear to even the earliest land hungry New England colonist that the colonist "fell to dealing with them in similar ways":
He set out poisoned meat for the wolf and gave the Indian blankets infected with smallpox. He raided the wolf's den to dig out and destroy the pups, and stole the Indian's children .... When he was accused of butchery for killing wolves and Indians, he spun tales of Mohawk cruelty and of wolves who ate fawns while they were still alive.... Indians and wolves who later came into areas where there were no more of either were called renegades. Wolves that lay around among the buffalo herds were called loafer wolves and Indians that hung around the forts were called loafer Indians.
As is so often the case, it was New England's religious elite who made the point more graphically than anyone. Referring to some Indians who had given offense to the colonists, the Reverend Cotton Mather wrote: "Once you have but got the Track of those Ravenous howling Wolves, then pursue them vigourously; Turn not back till they are consumed.... Beat them small as the Dust before the Wind." Lest this be regarded as mere rhetoric, empty of literal intent, consider that another of New England's most esteemed religious leaders, the Reverend Solomon Stoddard, as late as 1703 formally proposed to the Massachusetts Governor that the colonists be given the financial wherewithal to purchase and train large packs of dogs "to hunt Indians as they do bears." There were relatively few Indians remaining alive in New England by this time, but those few were too many for the likes of Mather and Stoddard. "The dogs would be an extreme terror to the Indians," Stoddard wrote, adding that such "dogs would do a great deal of execution upon the enemy and catch many an Indian that would be too light of foot for us." Then, turning from his equating of native men and women and children with bears deserving to be hunted down and destroyed, Stoddard became more conventional in his imagery: "if the Indians were as other people," he acknowledged, ". . . it might be looked upon as inhumane to pursue them in such a manner"; but, in fact, the Indians were wolves, he said, "and are to be dealt withal as wolves." For two hundred years to come Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, and other leaders, representing the wishes of virtually the entire white nation, followed these ministers' genocidal instructions with great care. It was their Christian duty as well as their destiny.
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... when in 1492 the seal was broken on the membrane that for tens of thousands of years had kept the residents of North and South America isolated from the inhabitants of the earth's other inhabited continents, the European adventurers and colonists who rushed through the breach were representatives of a religious culture that was as theologically arrogant and violence-justifying as any the world had ever seen. Nourished by a moral history that despised the self and that regarded the body and things sensual as evil, repulsive, and bestial, it was a culture whose holiest exemplars not only sought out pain and degradation as the foundation of their faith, but who simultaneously both feared and pursued what they regarded as the dark terrors of the wilderness-the wilderness in the world outside as well as the wilderness of the soul within. It was a faith that considered all humanity in its natural state to be "sick, suffering, and helpless" because its earliest mythical progenitors-who for a time had been the unclothed inhabitants of an innocent Earthly Paradise-had succumbed to a sensual temptation that was prohibited by a jealous and angry god, thereby committing an "original sin" that thenceforth polluted the very essence of every infant who had the poor luck to be born. Ghastly and disgusting as the things of this world-including their own persons-were to these people, they were certain of at least one thing: that their beliefs were absolute truth, and that those who persisted in believing otherwise could not be tolerated. For to tolerate evil was to encourage evil, and no sin was greater than that. Moreover, if the flame of intolerance that these Christian saints lit to purge humanity of those who persisted down a path of error became a sacred conflagration in the form of a crusade or holy war-that was only so much the better. Such holocausts themselves were part of God's divine plan, after all, and perhaps even were harbingers of his Son's imminent Second Coming.

It is impossible to know today how many of the very worldly men who first crossed the Atlantic divide were piously ardent advocates of this worldview, and how many merely unthinkingly accepted it as the religious frame within which they pursued their avaricious quests for land and wealth and power. Some were seeking souls. Most were craving treasure, or land on which to settle. But whatever their individual levels of theological consciousness, they encountered in this New World astonishing numbers of beings who at first seemed to be the guardians of a latter-day Eden, but who soon became for them the very picture of Satanic corruption.

And through it all, as with their treatment of Europe's Jews for the preceding half-millennium-and as with their response to wildness and wilderness since the earliest dawning of their faith-the Christian Europeans continued to display a seemingly antithetical set of tendencies: revulsion from the terror of pagan or heretical pollution and, simultaneously, eagerness to make all the world's repulsive heretics and pagans into followers of Christ. In its most benign racial manifestation, this was the same inner prompting that drove missionaries to the ends of the earth to Christianize people of color, but to insist that their new converts worship in segregated churches. Beginning in the late eighteenth century in America, this conflict of racial abhorrence and mission-and along with it a redefined concept of holy war-became secularized in the form of an internally contradictory political ideology. In the same way that the Protestant Ethic was transformed into the Spirit of Capitalism, while the Christian right to private property became justifiable in wholly secular terms, America as Redeemer Nation became Imperial America, fulfilling its irresistible and manifest destiny.

During the country's early national period this took the form of declarations that America should withdraw from world affairs into moral isolation (to preserve the chaste new nation from the depravities of the Old World and the miserable lands beyond) that was uttered in the same breath as the call to export the "Rising Glory of America," to bring democracy and American-style civilization to less fortunate corners of the earth. Less than a century later, during the peak era of American imperialism, the same contradictory mission presented itself

again: while those Americans who most opposed expansion into the Philippines shared the imperialists' belief in the nation's predestined right to rule the world, they resisted efforts to annex a nation of "inferior" dark-skinned people largely because of fears they had of racial contamination. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., said it most straightforwardly when he referred to America's virulent treatment of the Indians as the lesson to recall in all such cases, because, harsh though he admitted such treatment was, it had "saved the Anglo-Saxon stock from being a nation of half-breeds." In these few words were both a terrible echo of past warrants for genocidal race war and a chilling anticipation of eugenic justifications for genocide yet to come, for to this famous scion of America's proudest family, the would-be extermination of an entire race of people was preferable to the "pollution" of racial intermixture.

It was long before this time, however, that the notion of the deserved and fated extermination of America's native peoples had become a commonplace and secularized ideology. In 1784 a British visitor to America observed that "white Americans have the most rancorous antipathy to the whole race of Indians; nothing is more common than to hear them talk of extirpating them totally from the face of the earth, men, women, and children." And this visitor was not speaking only of the opinion of those whites who lived on the frontier. Wrote the distinguished early nineteenth century scientist, Samuel G. Morton: "The benevolent mind may regret the inaptitude of the Indian for civilization," but the fact of the matter was that the "structure of [the Indian's] mind appears to be different from that of the white man, nor can the two harmonize in the social relations except on the most limited scale." "Thenceforth," added Francis Parkman, the most honored American historian of his time, the natives-whom he described as "man, wolf, and devil all in one"-"were destined to melt and vanish before the advancing waves of Anglo-American power, which now rolled westward unchecked and unopposed." The Indian, he wrote, was in fact responsible for his own destruction, for he "will not learn the arts of civilization, and he and his forest must perish together."

But by this time it was not just the native peoples of America who were being identified as the inevitable and proper victims of genocidal providence and progress. In Australia, whose aboriginal population had been in steep decline (from mass murder and disease) ever since the arrival of the white man, it commonly was being said in scientific and scholarly publications, that to the Aryan . . . apparently belong the destinies of the future. The races whose institutions and inventions are despotism, fetishism, and cannibalism-the races who rest content in . . . placid sensuality and unprogressive decrepitude, can hardly hope to contend permanently in the great struggle for existence with the noblest division of the human species.... The survival of the fittest means that might-wisely used-is right. And thus we invoke and remorselessly fulfill the inexorable law of natural selection when exterminating the inferior Australian.

Meanwhile, by the 1860s, with only a remnant of America's indigenous people still alive, in Hawaii the Reverend Rufus Anderson surveyed the carnage that by then had reduced those islands' native population by 90 percent or more, and he declined to see it as a tragedy; the expected total die-off of the Hawaiian people was only natural, this missionary said, somewhat equivalent to "the amputation of diseased members of the body." Two decades later, in New Zealand, whose native Maori people also had suffered a huge population collapse from introduced disease and warfare with invading British armies, one A.K. Newman spoke for many whites in that country when he observed that "taking all things into consideration, the disappearance of the race is scarcely subject for much regret. They are dying out in a quick, easy way, and are being supplanted by a superior race."

Returning to America, the famed Harvard physician and social commentator Oliver Wendell Holmes observed in 1855 that Indians were nothing more than a "half-filled outline of humanity" whose "extermination" was the necessary "solution of the problem of his relation to

the white race." Describing native peoples as "a sketch in red crayons of a rudimental manhood," he added that it was only natural for the white man to "hate" the Indian and to "hunt him down like the wild beasts of the forest, and so the red-crayon sketch is rubbed out, and the canvas is ready for a picture of manhood a little more like God's own image."
Two decades later, on the occasion of the nation's 1876 centennial celebration, the country's leading literary intellectual took time out in an essay expressing his "thrill of patriotic pride" flatly to advocate "the extermination of the red savages of the plains." Wrote William Dean Howells to the influential readers of the Atlantic Monthly:
The red man, as he appears in effigy and in photograph in this collection [at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition], is a hideous demon, whose malign traits can hardly inspire any emotion softer than abhorrence. In blaming our Indian agents for malfeasance in office, perhaps we do not sufficiently account for the demoralizing influence of merely beholding those false and pitiless savage faces; moldy flour and corrupt beef must seem altogether too good for them.
Not to be outdone by the most eminent historians, scientists, and cultural critics of the previous generation, several decades later still, America's leading psychologist and educator, G. Stanley Hall, imperiously surveyed the human wreckage that Western exploration and colonization had created across the globe, and wrote:
Never, perhaps, were lower races being extirpated as weeds in the human garden, both by conscious and organic processes, so rapidly as to-day. In many minds this is inevitable and not without justification. Pity and sympathy, says Nietzsche, are now a disease, and we are summoned to rise above morals and clear the world's stage for the survival of those who are fittest because strongest.... The world will soon be overcrowded, and we must begin to take selective agencies into our own hands. Primitive races are either hopelessly decadent and moribund, or at best have demonstrated their inability to domesticate or civilize themselves.
And not to be outdone by the exalted likes of Morton, Parkman, Holmes, Howells, Adams, or Hall, the man who became America's first truly twentieth century President, Theodore Roosevelt, added his opinion that the extermination of the American Indians and the expropriation of their lands "was as ultimately beneficial as it was inevitable. Such conquests," he continued, "are sure to come when a masterful people, still in its raw barbarian prime, finds itself face to face with the weaker and wholly alien race which holds a coveted prize in its feeble grasp." It is perhaps not surprising, then, that this beloved American hero and Nobel Peace Prize recipient (who once happily remarked that "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth") also believed that "degenerates" as well as "criminals . . . and feeble-minded persons [should] be forbidden to leave offspring behind them." The better classes of white Americans were being overwhelmed, he feared, by "the unrestricted breeding" of inferior racial stocks, the "utterly shiftless," and the "worthless."
These were sentiments, applied to others, that the world would hear much of during the 1930s and 1940s. (Indeed, one well-known scholar of the history of race and racism, Pierre L. van den Berghe, places Roosevelt within an unholy triumvirate of the modern world's leading racist statesmen; the other two, according to van den Berghe, are Adolf Hitler and Hendrik Verwoerd, South Africa's original architect of apartheid.)'47 For the "extirpation" of the "lower races" that Hall and Roosevelt were celebrating drew its justification from the same updated version of the Great Chain of Being that eventually inspired Nazi pseudoscience. Nothing could be more evident than the fundamental agreement of both these men (and countless others who preceded them) with the central moral principle underlying that pseudoscience, as expressed by the man who has been called Germany's "major prophet of political biology," Ernst Haeckel, when he wrote that the "lower races"-Sepulveda's "homunculi" with few

"vestiges of humanity"; Mather's "ravenous howling wolves"; Holmes's "half-filled outline of humanity"; Howells's "hideous demons"; Hall's "weeds in the human garden"; Roosevelt's "weaker and wholly alien races"-were so fundamentally different from the "civilized Europeans [that] we must, therefore, assign a totally different value to their lives." Nor could anything be clearer, as Robert Jay Lifton has pointed out in his exhaustive study of the psychology of genocide, than that such thinking was nothing less than the "harsh, apocalyptic, deadly rationality" that drove forward the perverse holy war of the Nazi extermination campaign.
The first Europeans to visit the continents of North and South America and the islands of the Caribbean, like the Nazis in Europe after them, produced many volumes of grandiloquently racist apologia for the genocidal holocaust they carried out. Not only were the "lower races" they encountered in the New World dark and sinful, carnal and exotic, proud, inhuman, un-Christian inhabitants of the nether territories of humanity- contact with whom, by civilized people, threatened morally fatal contamination-but God, as always, was on the Christians' side. And God's desire, which became the Christians' marching orders, was that such dangerous beasts and brutes must be annihilated.
Elie Wiesel is right: the road to Auschwitz was being paved in the earliest days of Christendom. But another conclusion now is equally evident: on the way to Auschwitz the road's pathway led straight through the heart of the Indies and of North and South America.

Epilogue

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... one of the preconditions for the Spanish and Anglo-American genocides against the native peoples of the Americas was a public definition of the natives as inherently and permanently-that is, as racially-inferior beings. To the conquering Spanish, the Indians more specifically were defined as natural slaves, as subhuman beasts of burden, because that fit the use to which the Spanish wished to put them, and because such a definition was explicable by appeal to ancient Christian and European truths-through Aquinas and on back to Aristotle. Since the colonizing British, and subsequently the Americans, had little use for Indian servitude, but only wanted Indian land, they appealed to other Christian and European sources of wisdom to justify their genocide: the Indians were Satan's helpers, they were lascivious and murderous wild men of the forest, they were bears, they were wolves, they were vermin. Allegedly having shown themselves to be beyond conversion to Christian or to civil life-and with little British or American need for them as slaves-in this case, straightforward mass killing of the Indians was deemed the only thing to do.
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"Well, you know, that was the worst of it-this suspicion of their not being inhuman"-for surely the purpose of this passage is to demonstrate as powerfully as possible just how absolutely inhuman the Africans truly seemed, and how close to the murky borderland of the animal world they really were; thus the impact of the European's haunting sense "that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response" to-and a "remote kinship with"-such brutal, monstrous beings. As Achebe says in a different essay: "In confronting the black man, the white man has a simple choice: either to accept the black man's humanity and the equality that flows from it, or to reject it and see him as a beast of burden. No middle course ,exists except as an intellectual quibble." In fact, however, it is precisely that "intellectual quibble" that has poisoned Western thought, not only about Africans, but about all peoples of non-European ancestry, for centuries long past and likely for a good while yet to come. And

therein lies the true heart of Western darkness. For the line that separates Martin Luther's anti-Jewish fulminations from those of Adolf Hitler is a line of great importance, but ~t also ~s a line that is frighteningly thin. And once crossed, as ~t was not only m Germany in the early twentieth century, but in the Indies and the Americas four centuries before, genocide is but a step away.

From time to time during the past half-century Americans have edged across that line, if only temporarily, under conditions of foreign war. Thus, as John W. Dower has demonstrated, the eruption of war in the Pacific in the 1940s caused a crucial shift in American perceptions of the Japanese from a prewar attitude of racial disdain and dismissiveness (the curator of the Smithsonian Institution's Division of Anthropology had advised the President that the Japanese skull was "some 2,000 years less developed than ours, ' while it was widely believed by Western military experts that the Japanese were incompetent pilots who "could not shoot straight because their eyes were slanted") to a wartime view of them as super-competent warriors, but morally subhuman beasts. This transformation became a license for American military men to torture and mutilate Japanese troops with impunity-just as the Japanese did to Americans, but in their own ways, following the cultural reshaping of their own racial images of Americans. As one American war correspondent in the Pacific recalled in an Atlantic Monthly article:

We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers.

Dower provides other examples of what he calls the "fetish" of "collecting grisly battlefield trophies from the Japanese dead or near dead, in the form of gold teeth, ears, bones, scalps, and skulls"-practices receiving sufficient approval on the home front that in 1944 Life magazine published a "human interest" story along with "a full-page photograph of an attractive blonde posing with a Japanese skull she had been sent by her fiancée in the Pacific." (Following the Battle of Horse Shoe Bend in 1814, Andrew Jackson oversaw not only the stripping away of dead Indians' flesh for manufacture into bridle reins, but he saw to it that souvenirs from the corpses were distributed "to the ladies of Tennessee.")

A little more than two decades after that Life photograph and article appeared, General William C. Westmoreland was describing the people of Vietnam as "termites," as he explained the need to limit the number of American troops in that country:

If you crowd in too many termite killers, each using a screwdriver to kill the termites, you risk collapsing the floors or the foundation. In this war we're using screwdrivers to kill termites because it's a guerrilla war and we cannot use bigger weapons. We have to get the right balance of termite killers to get rid of the termites without wrecking the house.

Taking their cue from the general's dehumanization of the Southeast Asian "gooks" and "slopes" and "dinks," in a war that reduced the human dead on the enemy side to "body counts," American troops in Vietnam removed and saved Vietnamese body parts as keepsakes of their tours of duty, just as their fathers had done in World War Two. Vietnam, the soldiers said, was "Indian Country" (General Maxwell Taylor himself referred to the Vietnamese opposition as "Indians" in his Congressional testimony on the war), and the people who lived in Indian country "infested" it, according to official government language. The Vietnamese may have been human, but as the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Officer, John Mecklin, put it, their minds were the equivalent of "the shriveled leg of a polio victim," their "power of reason . . . only slightly beyond the level of an American six-year-old."

... During the brief duration of the [Gulf] war itself, American pilots referred to the killing of unarmed, retreating enemy soldiers as a "turkey shoot," and compared the Iraqi people-otherwise known as "ragheads"-to "cockroaches" running for cover when allied planes appeared overhead. Graffiti on bombs slung under the wings of American aircraft labeled them as "Mrs. Saddam's sex toy" and "a suppository for Saddam," while the American field commander subsequently admitted in a television interview that he wished he had been able to complete his job: "We could have completely closed the door and made it a battle of annihilation," he said; it was "literally about to become the battle of Cannae, a battle of annihilation" before-to his disappointment-the general was called off.

It should be noted that the third century B.C. battle of Cannae, during which Carthaginian troops under the command of Hannibal almost completely exterminated a group of 80,000 to 90,000 Romans, is still regarded as an exemplar of total destructiveness to military historians. Even today, Italians living in the region where the attack took place refer to the site of the massacre as Campo di Sangue, or "Field of Blood." In his own words, this is what General Norman Schwarzkopf had hoped to create in Iraq. And when confronted by the press with evidence that appeared to demonstrate the American government's lack of concern for innocent civilians (including as many as 55,000 children) who died as a direct consequence of the war-and with a United States medical team's estimate that hundreds of thousands more Iraqi children were likely to die of disease and starvation caused by the bombing of civilian facilities-the Pentagon's response either was silence, evasion, or a curt "war is hell."

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To some, the question now is: Can it happen again? To others, as we said in this book's opening pages, the question is, now as always: Can it be stopped? For in the time it has taken to read these pages, throughout Central and South America Indian men and women and children have been murdered by agents of the government that controls them, simply because they were Indians; native girls and boys have been sold on open slave markets; whole families have died in forced labor, while others have starved to death in concentration camps. More will be enslaved and more will die in the same brutal ways that their ancestors did, tomorrow, and every day for the foreseeable future. The killers, meanwhile, will continue to receive aid and comfort and support from the United States government, the same government that oversees and encourages the ongoing dissolution of Native American families within its own political purview- itself a violation of the U.N. Genocide Convention-through its willful refusal to deal adequately with the life-destroying poverty, ill health, malnutrition, inadequate housing, and despair that is imposed upon most American Indians who survive today.

That is why, when the press reported in 1988 that the United States Senate finally had ratified the United Nations Genocide Convention-after forty years of inaction, while more than a hundred other nations had long since agreed to its terms-Leo Kuper, one of the world's foremost experts on genocide wondered in print whether the long delay, and the obvious reluctance of the United States to ratify the Genocide Convention", derived from "fear that it might be held responsible, retrospectively, for the annihilation of Indians in the United States, or its role in the slave trade, or its contemporary support for tyrannical governments engaging in mass murder." Still, Kuper said he was delighted that at last the Americans had agreed to the terms of the Convention.

Others were less pleased-including the governments of Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, who filed formal objections with the United Nations regarding the U.S. action. For what the United States had done, unlike the other nations of the world, was approve and file with the U.N. a self-servingly

conditional instrument of ratification. Whatever the objections of the rest of the world's nations, however, it now seems clear that the United States is unlikely ever to do what those other countries have done-ratify unconditionally the Genocide Convention.
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Greatly varied though the specific details of individual cases may be, throughout the Americas today indigenous peoples continue to be faced with one form or another of a five-centuries-old dilemma. At the dawn of the fifteenth century, Spanish conquistadors and priests presented the Indians they encountered with a choice: either give up your religion and culture and land and independence, swearing allegiance "as vassals" to the Catholic Church and the Spanish Crown, or suffer "all the mischief and damage" that the European invaders choose to inflict upon you. It was called the requerimiento. The deadly predicament that now confronts native peoples is simply a modern requerimiento: surrender all hope of continued cultural integrity and effectively cease to exist as autonomous peoples, or endure as independent peoples the torment and deprivation we select as your fate.
In Guatemala, where Indians constitute about 60 percent of the population-as elsewhere in Central and South America-the modern requerimiento calls upon native peoples either to accept governmental expropriation of their lands and the consignment of their families to forced labor under criollo and ladino overlords, or be subjected to the violence of military death squads. In South Dakota, where Indians constitute about 6 percent of the population-as elsewhere in North America-the effort to destroy what remains of indigenous cultural life involves a greater degree of what Alexis de Tocqueville described as America's "chaste affection for legal formalities." Here, the modern requerimiento pressures Indians either to leave the reservation and enter an American society where they will be bereft and cultureless people in a land where poor people of color suffer systematic oppression and an ever-worsening condition of merciless inequality, or remain on the reservation and attempt to preserve their culture amidst the wreckage of governmentally imposed poverty, hunger, ill health, despondency, and the endless attempts of the federal and state governments at land and resource usurpation.
The Columbian Quincentennial celebrations have encouraged scholars worldwide to pore over the Admiral's life and work, to investigate every rumor about his ancestry and to analyze every jotting in the margins of his books. Perhaps the most revealing insight into the man, as into the enduring Western civilization that he represented, however, is a bland and simple sentence that rarely is noticed in his letter to the Spanish sovereigns, written on *he way home from his initial voyage to the Indies. After searching the coasts of all the islands he had encountered for signs of wealth and princes and great cities, Columbus says he decided to send "two men upcountry" to see what they could see. "They traveled for three days," he wrote, "and found an infinite number of small villages and people without number, but nothing of importance."
People without number-but nothing of importance. It would become a motto for the ages.

Quotations

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I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of Their Highnesses. We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as Their Highnesses may command. And we shall take your goods, and shall do you all the

mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey and refuse to receive their lord and resist and contradict him.
a statement Spaniards were required to read to Indians they encountered in the New World
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Bartolome de Las Casas the best known of the missionaries who accompanied Christopher Columbus to the New World
Once the Indians were in the woods, the next step was to form squadrons and pursue them, and whenever the Spaniards found them, they pitilessly slaughtered everyone like sheep in a corral. It was a general rule among Spaniards to be cruel; not just cruel, but extraordinarily cruel so that harsh and bitter treatment would prevent Indians from daring to think of themselves as human beings or having a minute to think at all. So they would cut an Indian's hands and leave them dangling by a shred of skin and they would send him on saying "Go now, spread the news to your chiefs." They would test their swords and their manly strength on captured Indians and place bets on the slicing off of heads or the curting of bodies in half with one blow. They burned or hanged captured chiefs.

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Bartoleme de Las Casas
By other massacres and murders besides the above, they have destroyed and devastated a kingdom more than a hundred leagues square, one of the hap- | piest in the way of fertility and population in the world. This same tyrant wrote that it was more populous than the kingdom of Mexico; and he told the truth. He and his brothers, together with the others, have killed more than four or five million peopIe in fifteen or sixteen years, from the year 1525 until 1540, and they continue to kill and destroy those who are still left; and so they will kill the remainder."
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... overall in central Mexico the population fell by almost 95 percent within seventy-five years following the Europeans' first appearance - from more than 25,000,000 people in 1519 to barely 1,300,000 in 1595.
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In northern Mexico, over a somewhat longer period, the native population fell from more than 2,500,000 to less than 320,000. Wherever the invaders went, the pattern was the same. On the island of Cozumel, off the eastern coast of Mexico, more than 96 percent of the population had been destroyed less than 70 years after the Spaniards' first arrival. In tbe Cuchumatan Highlands of Guatemala the population feII by 82 percent within the first half-century following European contact, and by 94 percent - from 260,000 to 16,000 - in less than a century and a half. In western Nicaragua 99 percent of the people were dead (falling in number from more than 1,000,000 to less than 10,000) before sixty years had passed from the time of the Spaniards' initial appearance. In western and central Honduras 95 percent of the people were exterminated in half a century. In Cordoba, near the Gulf of Mexico, 97 percent of the population was extinguished in little more than a century, while simultaneously, in neighboring Jalapa, the same lethal pattern held: 97 percent of the Jalapa population was destroyed- falling from 180,000 people in -1520 to 5000 in 1626. With dreary regularity, in countless other locales across the length and breadth of Mexico and down into Central America, the European intrusion meant the sudden and near total disappearance of populations that had lived and flourished there for thousands upon thousands of years.

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Peru and Chile, home of the Incas and one of the wealthiest and largest empires anywhere, covering virtually the entire western coast of the South American continent, had contained at least 9,000,000 people only a few years before the Europeans arrived, possibly as many as 14,000,000 or more. As elsewhere, the conquistadors' diseases preceded them-smallpox, and probably other epidemics swept down through Mexico and across the Andes in the early 1520s, even before Pizarro's first foray into the region- but also as elsewhere the soldiers and settlers who followed wreaked terrible havoc and destruction themselves. Long before the close of the century, barely 1,000,000 Peruvians remained alive. A few years more and that fragment was halved again. At least 94 percent of the population was gone-somewhere between 8,500.000 and 13,500.000 people had been destroyed.

Here, as in the Caribbean and Mexico and Central America, one could fill volumes with reports of murderous European cruelties, reports derived -from the Europeans' own writings. As in those other locaTes, Indians were flogged, hanged, drowned, dismembered, and set upon by dogs of war as the Spanish and others demanded more gold and silver than the natives were able to supply. One ingenious European technique for getting what they wanted involved burying Indian leaders in earth up to their waists after they had given the Spanish all the goods that they possessed. In that helpless position they then were beaten with whips and ordered to reveal the whereabouts of the rest of their treasure. When they could not comply, because they had no more valuable possessions, more earth was piled about them and the whippings were continued. Then more earth. And more beating. At last, says the Spanish informant on this particular matter, "they covered them to the shoulders and finally to the mouths." He then adds as an afterthought: "I even believe that a great number of natives were burned to death."

Pedro de Cieza de Leon, in what is justly regarded as the best firsthand account of the conquest of the Incas, describes in page after page the beautiful valleys and fields of this part of the world, the marvelous cities, the kind and generous native people-and the wholesale slaughter of them by the Spanish "as though a fire had gone, destroying everything in its path." Cieza de Leon was himself a conquistador, a man who believed in the right of the Spaniards to seize Indians and set them to forced labor, but only, he wrote, "when it is done in moderation." He explains:

I would not condemn the employment of Indian carriers ... but if a man had need of one pig, he killed twenty; if four Indians were wanted, he took a dozen . . . and there were many Spaniards who made the poor Indians carry their whores in hammocks borne on their shoulders. Were one ordered to enumerate the great evils, injuries, robberies, oppression, and ill treatment inflicted on the natives during these operations . . . there would be no end of it... for they thought no more of killing Indians than if they were useless beasts.

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p85

... overall in central Mexico the population fell by almost 95 percent within seventy-five years following the Europeans' first appearance - from more than 25,000,000 people in 1519 to barely 1,300,000 in 1595.

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For the Andean society as a whole ... within a century following their first encounter with the Spanish, 94-96 percent of their once-enormous population had been exterminated; along their 2000 miles of coastline, where once 6,500,000 people had lived, everyone was dead.

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By the time the sixteenth century had ended perhaps 200,000 Spaniards had moved their lives to the Indies, to Mexico, to Central America, and points further to the south. In contrast, by that time, somewhere between 60,000,000 and 80,000,000 natives from those lands were dead.